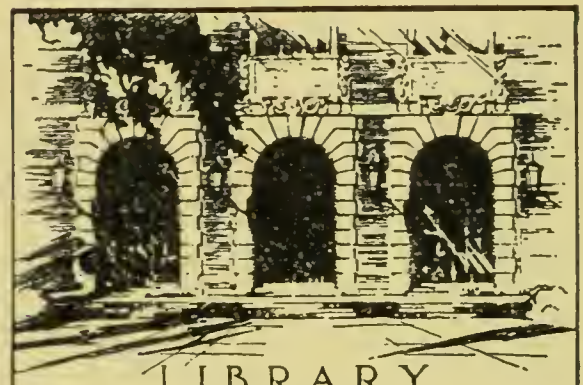
Eliza Gifford

Verquis Flintshire



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THE

MISERIES OF AN HEIRESS.

A NOVEL.

Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.

Eliza Gifford — Serquis Flintshire

THE

MISERIES OF AN HEIRESS.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

ANTHONY FREDERICK HOLSTEIN,

AUTHOR OF

SIR OWEN GLENDOWR; THE ASSASSIN OF ST. GLENROY; LOVE, MYSTERY, AND MISERY, &c.

I boast no tale in magic wonders rife;
But yet familiar, is there nought to prize,
O, Nature! in thy bosom-scenes of life?

CAMPBELL.

VOL. I.

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LEADENHALL-STREET.

1810.

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PREFACE.

THE pen dropped from my almost-paralyzed hand, after an incessant scribbling of many wearying hours, to finish "*The Miseries of an Heiress!*" I threw myself back in my chair, and with delight contemplated the four manuscript volumes which lay before me, as actually completed, when the morning twilight beamed through my undrawn curtained windows. "May it be propitious!" I exclaimed, with the true tragedian energy of an author; "may this Work indeed live to see the light of day, not in oblivion die!"

Although my hand was absolutely crippled by the incessant movement of

my pen, from the unusual length of time it had been exerted, yet my imagination was still alive, and would not be subdued into tranquillity. I closed my eyes, pained by the stretch of attention to the paper, where they had been rivetted; but it would not answer, sleep refused to associate with my tumultuous ideas; and as I sat, blind to real and surrounding objects, mine was but the waking vision of the mind, no dream of Morpheus.

Methought I saw these very Books lying on the counter of a Circulating Library, no matter where—in every town, in every alley, they abound; a party of females entered, lovely, of course, as all fair nymphs must be, when fancy delights in sketching their portraits, and discriminating, most assuredly, in my judgment at least, since they enquired for the last production of

of Mr. Holstein; but neither seemed informed with respect to its title.

The librarian pointed it out, as lying before them. The first volume was raised with curiosity, and as suddenly thrown down, as if in angered disappointment—"'THE MISERIES OF AN HEIRESS!' how absurd! Does the man expect us to read such nonsense? Who could believe in the miseries of an heiress?—He had far better have written the sorrows of poverty—authors are there generally quite *at home*; but the grievances of wealth imply a mere envious invective, because he had not the blessing in his own possession. When next you write, Mr. Anthony Frederick, retain in mind Æsop's fable of the sour grapes."

"You are severe, Henrietta," interrupted the whining-toned voice of a very sentimentally-thin young lady,

clad in a gossamer dress; "I consider the title quite interesting: the poor creature, no doubt, had a cruel parent of some description or other, or a guardian, or an old maiden aunt, who must have crossed her love with some dear, generous, but dependent youth, and only because she had wealth to secure a more splendid alliance."

"Nonsense, sister! that is an old story, defunct, I hope, and never, I trust, to have a resurrection, since its remains have been so scattered over the world of novel-writing, they could never be re-united to appear in their original form."

"Oh, I have it! I have it!" said a sprightly tall miss in her frocks, with skipping vivacity—"the poor lady was ran off with by some frightful, hideous, old man, who forced her to marry him, to secure her fortune to himself, and compelled

compelled her to repeat the marriage-vows, whether she could articulate them or not."

"Ah, women, women!" said a fat chubby-faced cit, who appeared the father of two of the females, "what idle nonsense your chimerical imaginations suggest! Pray, girls, learn a little rationality; depend upon it, it was the loss of her money which made the heiress truly miserable; and the title is all a catchpenny, like most of our flighty new publications, when the matter and the name always seem at war; or else a mere play upon words, without reason for its support." Then glancing over the title-page—"By the Author of 'The Assassin of St. Glenroy!' aye, now I recollect the book that I once took up by chance, with honest Mr. Granger in it. Well, that character did shew some prudence,

and great good sense; for, to me, it was as plain as a pike-staff, that all the while the Author was speaking himself so sagaciously, although he gave all those wise sayings about money-making to a fishmonger, which was the most silly part of the business, to be sure."

"Dear papa, how could you approve such vulgar matter? I declare I could not support the torture of burthening my mind with his low language; indeed I think it quite derogatory to the elevation of romance, when similar beings are suffered to sully its towering refinement."

"I should hope the Author had somewhat more of morality in view than what any of you young ladies appear to conceive necessary for a work of imagination," said a prim, stern-looking, elderly female—"I do not

not doubt that he means to display that the '*miseries*' of his heroine were occasioned by an apprehension of not justly dispensing and using the lavish gifts of Providence; or, what is still more probable, that her miseries have arisen from disobedience to senior relatives and advisers."

"Heavens! then I will not read it, positively," said the sentimental sylphid Emma, as the volume fell from the hand which had again raised it for further inspection; "I could not support another '*dramatic sermon*' upon any account—a religious heroine sets me to sleep."

"Unless she is at her last prayers for a husband—eh, Emma?" and the fat little alderman chuckled at his own fancied liveliness.

"Or perhaps," rejoined a fourth, "the beautiful heiress was immured in

some antique castle of the North, with a proud old Scotchwoman, who would not let her peep beyond the dismal walls of her prison, lest she should elope with the doctor or the quilldriver of the neighbouring village; and thus we have doubtless anticipated all the incidents this novel can contain. But, as I have no engagement for this evening abroad, nor company at home, I must have *some* novel to wile away the tedious hours; and this, I dare affirm, will do quite as well as any other of *Minerva's* babes."

Involuntary reflections are not always pleasing—such were mine at this epoch, and I was not fully determined whether to exhibit the crying or laughing philosopher; the former, however, I believe, did prevail, since the title of this Work remains unaltered by the vision.

The

The necessity of that torment, a preface, now haunted my mind, there is something so *outré* in sending a rich heroine into the world without this protection; but, it must be confessed, the child was brought forth ere the father took this into consideration; and, with somewhat of Hibernian idea, he resolved to convert into a preface the after-reflections of the Work, which have been just faithfully detailed.

Some few weeks before "*Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*" was spoken of as in the press, a friend suggested to me a similar idea for the foundation of a Work, which, however, was not intended to have been in the same style as the very religious, serious production, which has issued from the far more competent powers of Miss More. I hesitated between a Gentleman in search of a Wife, or a Lady in search

of a Husband; but, being then engaged in the construction of another Novel, I determined to embrace the hint of my friend at my leisure.

Meanwhile my purpose was stayed by the publication of "CŒLEBS;" and I wholly relinquished the design, until it occurred to me, that a *Latinized* Bachelor in search of a Wife, might be answered by an *Italianized* Maiden in search of a Husband: I therefore, under the appropriate name of ZITELLA, sought to display this female. I offered Mr. Newman to finish it within a given period, if he would engage to purchase the Work when completed: his reply was, that one of a similarly descriptive title, "CELIA," was then in his hands, and consequently my proposal was declined.

On also finding that Nubilia and Cœlibia had set out on the same hunt, I thought

I thought the subject would be literally overdone, and I therefore forbore the hackneyed theme; when, as only one volume of my Work was then finished, I afforded it very extensive alterations, and resolved to convert the original *second* title into a principal, and only one.

It promises nothing more than a mere narrative of *probable events*, without entering into the thread-worn subjects of fashionable folly, as it consists in crowded parties, operatic extravaganzas, card mania, or personal *domestic faux pax*: I have endeavoured to delineate the manners and habits of elevated society, as they in reality exist.

Peace to the resemblance of the NOBLE JOCKEY, the honourable BLACKLEGS, or the THEATRIC PETIT MAITRE! Why should the pages of this

kind of modern literature be so anxious to commemorate individuals "born to be forgot?" The portrait of *one* will suffice for all the species; nor shall we gain ought by contemplating so incessantly objects deserving rather of our contempt than attention. Does not the volume of the world contain beings, in whom the mingled extremes of good and evil, of noble qualities and puerile failings, blend, and render them far more interesting to develop? Let *Nature* be our book of study, but let us select from amidst the leaves, those chapters teeming with matter and information, which, each day, arise to invigorate the imagination of the Author.

A *modern* novel-writer, in a preface to his first Work, has affirmed, that the conversation of the day is in reality so frivolous and inane, that, to justly delineate

lineate it, we must not attempt even to blend wit or repartee, for it then loses its semblance to fashionable discourse.

On this head my sentiments differ: I grant, the frequent ideotic lisp of the tonish belle is often prominent, that the slang of Newmarket is the meet reply of many a turf beau in a drawing-room; but I do not conceive that, like the supposed magical circle drawn around the downward-bent head of a feathered animal, which is said to benumb its powers of resuscitation, that, in entering within the boundaries of a court sphere, *alias* denominated a fashionable circle, the faculties of mind are to become suddenly annihilated. Merely because the conversation is not scientific, not literary in its disquisitions, argumentative on a higher ground of reasoning, must it sink into the

the very depths of folly and stupidity? must it be dull, because it is light? Are there not individuals amid the *haut-ton* who can amuse, even entertain? I have turned from the pedantic, formal, serious harangue of an antique research into mere matters of fact, to the playful accents of a woman of rank and fashion. True, I have not derived instruction from her conversation; but I have felt my ideas enlivened, freed from the condensed vapour of too-dilated, plodding reflections, by the *agremens* of mere *badinage*. Nor do I view this passing sport of words, this *nothing* of sober calculation, as wholly contemptible: the spirit of *badinage*, without being a science, is certainly a very desirable art; it extracts from the heaviness of a party, where individuals, neither out of previous intimate knowledge, nor reciprocal regard, nor yet

assimilated

assimilated understanding, are compelled, by the laws of society, to meet: it speaks a language all can understand, it diffuses cheerfulness over the group, and it dispenses animation, if not intelligence, around.

Manner, however, effects much; and the retailer on paper has a far more difficult task, to give point to conversation, than the spontaneous speaker. I am fully aware of the difficulty of this; and instead of professing only to write dull, unmeaning frivolity, because it is the language of high life, I am sensible that my warmest exertions to pourtray this species of *la bagatelle*, fail in attaining this purpose, and that society has not wholly banished from its circle the refined repartee nor prompt *bon mot*, however, in a fashionable squeeze, the silly and the witty, the sage and the ideot, may be promiscuously

promiscuously jumbled, and the one, for the time, be equally lost as the other, to mere temporary observation.

I will not, therefore, cast the obloquy on a numerous herd, which I am sensible exists only in my own deficiency of talent—I would seek to contrast those members of society who are entertaining, with those who are fatiguing; and by this I would endeavour to render the lesson of ridicule more clear: nor would I yet cast illiberal reflection on all who happen to move, from birth or circumstance, in the western atmosphere of our metropolis.

Again I repeat, I detail no foreign scenes; this production is intended for a mere copy of the natural events and circumstances which might probably attend an heiress of wealth and rank. I conceive it indispensable

to

to the hope of attaining any success in correct delineation of life and its vicissitudes, that the novel-writer should keep as much as possible to the sphere of creation in which he is most at home, and in which he has been accustomed to view passing events: how far I have succeeded in the annexed performance, I cannot be expected to be a correct judge; to the ordeal of public criticism I must bow. I am conscious these Four Volumes display less incident than the "Assassin of St. Glenroy," or even "Sir Owen Glendowr;" in fact, I consider it as entirely differing from either of those publications.

I wrote on as fancy arose, with the exception of a mere skeleton plot, imperfectly conceived, and still more so connected; I had no idea, when I first began, of rendering the subject more diffuse than two volumes, and was myself

self deceived in the quantity I had written of manuscript, until, upon counting over the pages, I found I had already entered upon the third volume; nor, even then, left sufficient space to develop the plot, independent of a few embryo incidents. I was thus induced to commence a fourth, which, I confess, was contrary to my inclinations; for I think three volumes should be the extent of any Novel or Romance of this description; and this being my own impression, it certainly was not my intention to have exceeded that number.

THE

MISERIES OF AN HEIRESS.

CHAP. I.

The gilded vessels sport along the stream,
Fann'd with propitious gales: the sides are firm,
The hull capacious, and the swelling sails
Float to the breeze of summer. Ah! how soon,
Torn by the tempest's wildly rushing wind,
And foundering in the deep, it lies deform'd,
A shatter'd wreck!"

DR. OGILVIE.

The Maternal Memoir.

IN an elegant dressing-room, terminating a suit of apartments in a commodious mansion, situated in a retired part of Dorsetshire,

shire, sat the invalid Countess of Darnford: her emaciated form, supported by pillows, rested in a Merlin chair, drawn near the fire. The dead gloom of fixed and pained reflection, diffused an awful solemnity over her pallid features: her eyes, unsoftened by tears, beamed the impression of steady unbroken contemplation; for it was the meditation of all the powers of the soul bent on futurity, and not the mere organs of sight directed to any sublunary object.

The door was slowly unclosed by a tremulous hand, and gave entrance to the lovely juvenile form of Lady Zitella Herbert: her auburn ringlets were drawn low and thick over her forehead, to conceal eyes swoln by grief and despair. Effort had suppressed, at this moment, that stream of filial sorrow, which had, for some preceding hours, copiously flowed: the relief of past indulgence was checked, while fortitude was called in aid to smother every appearance of distress, and conceal the opinion of the medical attendants respecting

ing their patient, which had been, from benevolent notions, imparted to her suffering child, lest the unprepared shock upon a young and sanguine mind, hitherto only accustomed to the plenitude of fortune's smiles, should have been wholly subdued by the first visitation of adverse fate. Yet the stroke fell heavy on the heart of Zitella; and although she felt the necessity of placing a curb on the visible appearance of that acute grief which really existed, still effort could not altogether supercede its effects; the heaving bosom, panting beneath the suppressed weight of anguish, the agitated tremor of every limb, and the faltering voice, were little calculated to correspond with an assumed serenity of countenance.

"Is Dr. Moreland gone?" enquired the invalid.

"He is, my mother," faintly articulated Zitella, and turned toward a window, to conceal renewed emotion.

A pause ensued.

"The

"The mournful intelligence to you, my child, is then communicated; fear not to affirm that it is so, for it was at my express desire that Dr. Moreland has removed from your mind that anchor on which you so confidently rested: hope, my Zitella, as far as it respects my life, is annihilated. The friend of tried excellence and worth, the good man, who has been urged to this painful task, regards you with almost parental interest; gently and affectionately. I knew he would reveal the tale of sorrow to your young and tender heart."

She was interrupted by the now irrepressible sobs of her afflicted auditor.

"Dry these selfish tears, Zitella, and remember, that the anticipated event you so deeply deplore, emancipates her you love from a further endurance of misery and woe: rise, my child, superior to this weak indulgence of feeling, and prove the strength of your affection, by retaining a firm, indelible impression, of *the last injunctions of maternal solicitude,* bequeathed

in

in the form of instruction, from the dying lips of her to whom you are so dear; and this can now only be done by a brief communication of some particulars connected with me. Separated from my husband, you have as yet been kept in ignorance of the cause which operated that effect; for I wished to reserve the communication for a period when it might produce an impression firm and indelible: that epoch is *now* arrived—your mind is, at this awful moment, peculiarly susceptible of the influence I mean to afford it, and, by learning from your unfortunate mother the consequences of those follies and of that infatuation which have coloured her life, be armed by the fatal warning you will receive, to avoid that rock on which she voluntarily suffered her bark of happiness to founder.

"The heiress of my grandmother, I was, at an early age, ushered into life, with all that *eclât* attendant upon being thus endowed

dowed by fortune: credulous and unsuspicious, I penetrated not beyond the fairy surface; supremely happy in delusion, I analyzed not its source, but, in full confidence, weakly accepted all I saw for reality. Lovers bowed in crowds at the shrine of my beauty, while my mirror confirmed, rather than contradicted, the flattering tale; and while they did homage to the influence of my charms, I recollected not that the trappings of *wealth* decorated and gave full effect to the idol of their devotion. I believed, implicitly believed, the existence of disinterested affection, even among the many; and, foremost of the group, encouraged by my smiles, advanced the admired Herbert, an indigent scion of a noble house, but even destitute of future expectancies, for many a branch then intervened between him and the envied title of Darnford: he possessed person to attract, manner to interest, and an understanding at once brilliant, from the attainment of

worldly knowledge by reading men and books, and a proficient in the subtle sophistry of delineating artificial passion.

"The union of these apparent perfections reached my heart; a weak attachment, founded on this basis, to which vanity gave reciprocity, completed the romance of folly, and, with a father's malediction heavy on my head, I rushed into the arms of vice and duplicity—I became the bride of Herbert! But short were the days of halcyon delusion; for, ere I had relinquished that dear-bought appellation, the husband presented a different aspect to the impassioned lover: soon, by artifice refined, he obtained from me a deed, whereby I resigned into his hands my interest in the large possessions bequeathed me by the will of my well-intentioned grandmother; but, happily for my descendant, neither he nor I were sufficiently well-versed in law to know, that this was merely at his disposal during my life, and was, after my decease, disposed of by a claim not to be

evaded: thus it providentially proved, that I could only eventually injure myself by an infatuation so destructive. Zitella, your father rests in the grave; I would, therefore, willingly suffer his crimes to sink into the same oblivion, if it were not necessary to steel your heart against the witchery of romance in a similar election."

Weakness now, for a moment, subsided in the dying Countess; her eyes received temporary illumination from the theme, while her cheeks emanated a faint bloom, from a communication of this long-smothered secret, and the confession of past error, which, she fondly hoped, would serve as a beacon to deter her darling from a fate as severe as that she had experienced. She grasped the hand of Zitella in continuing—"The gift of thy mother, given in fond confiding security in his honour and affection, was——Oh, my beloved child, how painful, even at this hour, is the recollection, that this fatal gift was bestowed on the author of thy being, at a moment

moment when, kneeling beside thy cradle, he alternately imprinted kisses on thy infant lips, and those of his credulous and soon-forsaken wife! The means I afforded, proved those he only waited to attain ere he quitted England, and bore with him the guilty partner of his crimes, similarly linked in the bonds of wedlock to another. She was a woman of rank and of independent fortune; but his avarice knew no bounds—he stript us of our all, leaving me overwhelmed in debt, and got too much of an invalid to quit my room, while my mind was yet corroded by the recollection of my father's continued displeasure. The rapid strides of poverty awakened me from my mental lethargy; an execution was in the house, while the merciless creditor, involving the innocent sufferers with the guilty mercenary, constrained me to immediate departure and retrenchment.

"The heart wrought up to misery by heavy unexpected calamity, can only reach a certain point of woe; beyond this ex-

treme, it becomes for a time apathetic. Happily for my reason, it had with me this temporary termination: I embraced my poor orphan, and taking her with me, I sought a more humble dwelling. The cares of my infant, beggared for a time by my folly, and thrown solely upon my exertions, employed my whole attention; for when reason had regained her influence from the stunning blow she had received in calamity, a sense of the duties I had pledged myself to perform, superceded the inanity into which I had been at first plunged. But how could I, the fondled child of prosperity, nursed in the lap of luxury, indulged and gratified in the most extravagant whims of wavered fancy, whose very wishes had been anticipated, how could I struggle with sorrow, poverty, and an infant claimant on my care, who never before had even known the absence of a comfort?—As contempt and disgust superceded the lacerated feelings of love, my mind gradually descended to the common walks

walks of life; but in vain I sought for the means of support—I had been taught no useful lesson of education, and the refinements of accomplishment afforded me no immediate relief from pressing want, who, with all her haggard train of evils, pressed heavy on me.

" At this eventful period, that Edgeworth, whom you have so often heard me mention in terms of the highest encomium, stepped in between me and destruction: he became the delegate of Heaven; he restored a ray of peace to my bursting brain, the balm of comfort and consolation to my widowed heart—he bore to me the pardon of my father: it was a conditional one; but, ah! how welcome was the sound upon any terms!—I was to retire from the world, to spend the remainder of my days on this spot, and never to seek his presence.

" The preceding clauses were joyfully hailed; but the last was so painful a conviction that I was only partially forgiven,

rather at the intercession of my active friend than the spontaneous offering of returning affection from my parent, that it required all the influence of the inestimable Edgeworth over my mind, to induce an acquiescence in this restriction.—The rest, my child, you know; for years you have witnessed the blameless life of the recluse. Fortune, who, with capricious bounty, so often lavishes her gifts on the unworthy head, once more extended her replenished sheaves to Herbert: a mortality in his family unexpectedly secured to him the Earldom of Darnford, and the estates attached to that title. He returned to England on this event, and something like compunction, I believe, did operate on his mind, in a proposal to afford me now a liberal establishment; but, with revived indignation, I rejected ought from the hand of him who had duped and deserted me. All I asked, was the disposal of my child; nor was this denied; but, alas! not from kindness to me, but indifference

to

to your fate. His *chère amie* had abandoned him; and ill health having assailed him so far as to render him almost a prisoner in his own house, he had caused it to be intimated to me, that he would be gratified to see me again at the head of his table: but my affection had been annihilated, my confidence destroyed, my respect and esteem gone for ever, and in no such arrangement would I acquiesce. He soon afterwards obtained a situation of lucrative importance and high authority in one of our colonies; and for many years he again bade adieu to England, during which time my kind forgiving parent paid the debt of nature, bequeathing me the estate on which this mansion is situated.

"About eighteen months since, the return of the Earl to his native land awakened all my fears; and they were but too soon realized, as he immediately and formally demanded you from me, professing that the encomiums he had heard lavished upon your beauty and talents, had excited

his interest as well as affection; for that he wished to afford you the opportunity of a high finish to those attractions from the aid of the first masters, and present you to the world with the *eclât* worthy your rank as his daughter, and the fortune to which, at my death, you would become entitled. Expostulation, entreaty, humanity, pled in vain, and, at the critical age of thirteen, you were torn from my arms."

"Oh, my mother, remind me not of that sad moment!"

"And why not, my Zitella? it will but prepare you for a far more solemn separation. Ah, my child, it was that cruel deed which struck the knell to thy mother's life!—Had I consigned thee to a parent who could appreciate thy worth, whose heart was capable of instilling into thine the precepts of virtue and religion, inculcated by example, and enforced by the consistency of uniform conduct, to nurture and mature the seeds of those sacred truths my feeble powers had been exerted

early

early to implant; had I resigned thee to a father whose affectionate solicitude would have proved an ægis to you, upon your first *debût* into the world, I would have struggled with my own feelings to have secured to you so vast a benefit; but to the protector to whom I had given a legal claim to you, it was agony to every fibre of your mother's heart. The death of the Earl, however, soon relieved you from his authority, and I once more folded my daughter to my aching bosom. Beneath my own less sumptuous roof, with jealous vigilance I re-examined every *trait* of character, I sought to trace the source of each trifling variation the change of situation might have created: the result of this scrutiny was a triumph I would have purchased with my life.

"Your mind had early displayed a firmness, that rendered you less liable to the influence of bad effects from novel instruction or example, and the encrease of that lofty dignity of character, I trust under

proper controul from the higher influence of religious and moral duties, neither displeased or alarmed me, for I beheld in it a support which failed your mother, whose mind was cast in a different mould.

"Zitella, value thyself; nor weakly surrender thy heart and hand at the impulse of romantic fancy, or the flowery profession of him who may be skilled in deception, and alone urged by mercenary motives to seek alliance with "*the heiress:*" remember, when surrounded by adulators and admirers, when lovers multiply around, that Fortune waves her banner over thy head with magnetic attraction. Oh, my child, the trite simile of the lottery is but too just, as far as it regards matrimony! the chances are not more favourable than a thousand blanks to one prize. The young, thoughtless, vain beauty, fancies, when receiving proposals of marriage, a certain homage to her own individual attractions: alas! she recollects not the varied motives which have most probably united

united to produce the proffer! — How many act under the dominion of resentment, to her who is really, and still in secret, loved? each transfers his perjured vows with the impotence of weak and erring vengeance, and in gratifying this ignoble passion, seeks to annihilate a foe never to be thus subdued; and when too late perhaps, discovers he has irreparably injured another, without deriving any benefit to himself: while a second in wedlock only seeks the fulfilment of a duty, in giving a lawful heir to hereditary possessions or distinctions. Yet another hopes to find, in the partner of his life, a mere domestic drudge; attending only to self, expects to blend the *economy* of love and all the household virtues, forgetting to rank in the list, those that would secure to him a rational companion after the bloom of youth had subsided, or an example and instructress to those immortal beings to whom she may have given existence. A fourth, urged by ambition, allies himself

not to the woman, for she is secondary in his consideration, and only regarded as the means whereby he is enabled to accomplish his higher purposes, making matrimony but the ladder to aid his ascent in the attainment of his object. And last in the mental group stands *avarice*—but my own sad history so much exemplifies all that I would here pourtray, that it becomes unnecessary to expatiate further.—And now, my child, suffer me to direct your attention to the more pleasing side of this my picture."

"Oh no, my dear mother, my mind has formed its future views—a life of celibacy will be my decided choice. Terrified by your fate, I am satisfied to glide through the thorny path alone, securing to myself independance from the tyranny of man, and the moral certainty of becoming the dupe of mere profession."

"Zitella, you distress me: my warning voice was not intended to produce an effect so little in unison with my wishes. You

You were born for active life: Heaven did not endow you with its most precious gifts for the purpose you meditate. I only wish to guard you against the depravity of humanity, not to recommend isolation from your fellow-beings. It is not only my wish, it is my earnest *entreaty*, that you will marry; but in so doing, select for the sacred trust one worthy of the distinction; let his religious and moral principles and conduct be sifted and scrutinized; and only be *well convinced* that you obtain the genuine ore, and are not deceived by counterfeit coin.—But my strength is exhausted, and the agitation you have evidently this day sustained, unite to urge a close to our long and painful conference."

The anxious mother reclined her head upon the bosom of her daughter, and, wrapt in fond embrace, they were only separated by the entrance of the nurse, who prevailed on the exhausted invalid to retire for the night.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The hour approaches—the tremendous hour!
In whose dark moments deeper perils lower;
Still so enwrapt in pleasure's gay disguise,
They lurk invisible to cautious eyes;
And, unsuspected by the fair one, wait
To cancel or confirm her blissful fate. HAYLEY.

.....

Tell, ye who tend
The bed of death, how, o'er the helpless race
Of human victims, strides the harpy foot
Of misery triumphant! DR. OGILVIE.

The filial Promise.

ZITELLA, by the command of her mother, sought her own chamber; but, unable to obtain any respite by sleep from the pending

ing evil, in the near approach of death to her she so tenderly loved, arose, at early dawn, unrefreshed, and softly unclosing the door of the adjoining room, beheld the invalid enjoying a profound slumber. Hope reassumed its station in her bosom, and she contemplated with encreased delight, the faint tinge of colour on the pallid countenance of Lady Darnford. Alas! the very feature of death in the consumptive patient, points out to the novice returning health! Sleep was here but his harbinger—the hectic flush but another precursor of his approach.

The eyes of the Countess opened, and discovered her early visitor; they beamed with heavenly expression; they were clear, bright, and rendered even brilliant, by the effect of treacherous fever, which had also afforded temporary strength.—"You have dwelt so entirely on my heart, Zitella, that, even in sleep, you have not been absent. I feel revived by the long respite from pain the prescription of Dr. Moreland has

afforded

afforded me, therefore able to resume a conversation, at the close of which your apparent determination of a single life startled and distressed me."

The affectionate girl seated herself beside the bed, and taking the hand of the Countess, listened with attention and deference to the arguments offered by her faithful friend, on behalf of that state she was anxious she should adorn.

The silence of her auditor, the respect and deference she had ever been accustomed to pay to her opinion and counsel, fully satisfied the Countess that she had made her a convert to this opinion; while Zitella, regardless of self, and only anxious to grant every consolation to her maternal guardian, suffered her to be confirmed in the belief, until she was forcibly struck by the question,—If she would promise her to seek among the herd of those suitors with whom she doubted not she would be surrounded, for one whom her heart and principles would select, and bestow herself where

where they might direct, without unnecessary delay from fastidious theory, and the vain hope of meeting perfection embodied in a human form ?

The poor Zitella was unprepared for this appeal ; her heart was so deeply interested in the scene before her, self had so wholly faded from her view, that, if the request had been made from the same source, she would have attempted impossibilities. Had she reflected, this demand, under present impressions, would have almost amounted to that appearance ; but the prayers, the entreaties, of Lady Darnford, alarmed at the silence of her daughter, were renewed: a young, beautiful, and rich orphan heiress, was surely safer, and happier, under the protection of legitimate love.

The Countess could not plead in vain to her Zitella; the promise was accorded, and the blessing, the fervent blessing, of the dying mother, rested on the head of her child.

A pause of awful solemnity ensued, again broken

broken by the unfortunate Countess.—"I shall leave you, Zitella, to the care of two guardians; the one is my own brother, and only surviving relative, many years past a resident in Bengal; but, in the course of twelve months, he purposes returning, finally to settle in England.—During the intervening time, my dear child, Dr. Moreland has kindly proposed to receive you as an inmate at Sudley Hall; and I rejoice much at the circumstance, since your age will then be more advanced ere you enter into the world. Well aware, however, that monied transactions are always best to be avoided among family connexions, I have nominated a valued friend as the principal trustee of your fortune, and to my brother have left more immediately the care of your personal welfare, and disposal in life. With the latter I wish you principally to reside; and, many months since, expressed, by letter, my wishes to that effect, in case of my own death, to the approach of which event I have

have not been insensible. By the last India ships, I received an acquiescent answer to my request; and he has proposed you should, on such an event, in every respect become the elected mistress of his house, since he is himself a bachelor.

"Two months of each successive year, I, however, require of you to pass at the mansion of Lord Edgeworth, in Wiltshire: my reason for this desire is, that I conceive the retirement in which his Lordship continues invariably buried, will prove a seasonable and even useful break to that dissipation which you will most probably encounter at the dwelling of Nugent, who returns to England in the character of a nabob, having accumulated extensive Indian wealth, independent of his very handsome patrimonial estates in this country.

"I have never seen Lord Edgeworth since his seclusion, which commenced many years ago, on a separation from his Lady. Over this separation much mystery lowers; but I am well convinced, that, let

report

report vary in its observations and assigned reasons as it may, Edgeworth can never have acted from motives otherwise than honourable; and although myself as much in ignorance, in regard to existing circumstances, as the rest of the world, I rely in fullest confidence on the certainty, that reasons, just, strong, and weighty, have influenced his conduct throughout this certainly extraordinary procedure towards Lady Edgeworth.

"One daughter, the only offspring of this marriage, resides with him, and I believe is three years your junior: cultivate her friendship, my dear Zitella, or rather extend yours towards her. I had promised, should I have proved the survivor of his Lordship, to receive this precious trust beneath my own roof, and sustained that maternal character, from which unfathomable circumstance has estranged her for very many years; but fate has decreed that Edgeworth should become the guardian of my daughter, rather than I of his. Remember,

member, however, Zitella, that I depute you my substitute, as far as your experience and ability may allow, and require of you to offer some remuneration of a mother's debt of gratitude, by every service, however trifling, it may lie within the compass of your ability to extend to Flora Edgeworth."

The appearance of the worthy Dr. Moreland broke the thread of discourse; the Countess, however, felt relieved, in having concluded those more immediate injunctions which maternal tenderness had dictated, to guard an only offspring against the perils naturally attendant upon her rising career; and those moments in which strength admitted the ability, were, for many successive days, devoted to the exertion of that warning voice, which gave, in the glowing colours of fatal truth, the misery into which a misplaced attachment had consigned the dying sufferer, and, by renewed precept, aided the growth of those virtues

virtues which had early distinguished the young Zitella.

Life lingered longer within its mortal tenement than suffering nature could have been supposed capable of sustaining: it fled at length, with the tranquil ease of gradual exhaustion; and the funeral ceremony tendered the last mournful tribute of respect to the departed Countess, whose remains were deposited in the family-vault of Nugent, according to her own express desire; and immediately after, the afflicted daughter of this unfortunate woman became an inmate at Sudley Hall, the seat of Dr. Moreland.

CHAP. III.

O best of wives! O dearer far to me
Than when thy virgin charms
Were yielded to my arms!

LITTLETON.

Antique Love, and modern Celebrity.

OF the mind and disposition of our heroine I shall here proffer nothing, let her actions and her sentiments proclaim them: in regard to person, she had, from cradled infancy, received the full impression of its native loveliness, since maternal judgment had prompted this lavish panegyric, that the sound of praise, in becoming familiar to her ear, might blunt the flattering adulation

lation of man, aided by the charm of novel language. The Countess of Darnford rested the greatest danger on a sudden and unexpected burst of admiration; she grounded her conduct on the conviction, that the greatest pleasures lose their influence by frequent recurrence, and that vanity would eventually become satiated by the redundance of its own aliment. It was *an heiress,* over whose education a mother's superintending care extended, and worldly experience had taught, that the most moderate gifts of person, when centered in a female thus distinguished, were elevated even to the fixed standard of beauty, by the common voice. Avarice is a sentiment so ignoble, that its most despicable votaries shrink from the public avowal of its influence; and men, too often to conceal a dastard meanness of soul, seek, under the covert of beauty, to veil mercenary attraction.

Zitella's style of person was not calculated to please the universal taste; there was

was a decisive character in her beauty, a character which imbued each feature with soul, and stamped her countenance with singular originality: a proud nobility of heart seemed to live in that dignity of carriage, which even attended the earlier stages of juvenility, and had gradually matured into individual haughtiness of pretension, as revolving years lent strength to the lineaments of her energetic mind; while the lofty elegance of its movement rivetted attention even more than the symmetrical loveliness of her figure. During the fifteen months she had resided in the town mansion of her father, she had frequently visited the public amusements the theatres and opera-house; indeed had been permitted to emerge into seve private parties, given by the more imm diate family-connexions of the Earl o Darnford; but, too young for presen tion, her Ladyship was then merely view as a beautiful child—a belle of future p mise. The mental powers of Zitella wo

 howe

however, matured beyond other years; and having herself no part to support in the conversation of her seniors, her capacious mind had perhaps the greater opportunity for observation: thus, in the habits of society, our heroine was no novice, as far as respected the manners of the day, long before her regular *debût* was to occur under the auspices of the expected nabob. But it may now be necessary to desert the more immediate object of our memoir, and exhibit those individuals with whom she was surrounded, at the domestic fireside of Sudley Hall.

Dr. Moreland was one of those philanthropic men whom the society of our day so seldom presents, a man who judged others by the excellent standard of his own heart; ever solicitous to palliate the misdeeds of the miscreant, by the most charitable construction upon the motives of action, the tear of commiseration for human frailty was the ready offspring of this benevolent Christian, while the harsh sentence of reproof

proof faltered on his lips; and although often the dupe of the worthless hypocrite, from weak and credulous generosity, yet repeated experience had failed to close the avenues of liberality, and the estimable few suffered not from the depravity of the many.

Mrs. Moreland smiled at the credulity of her husband, and prided herself upon her own *judgmatic* powers, when, in fact, no being was ever more calculated to be deceived: her whole sum of knowledge was derived from books; of the world she had in reality seen nothing, yet she believed herself deeply versed in the study of human kind, and fully conversant in the chicanery of men and manners; credulous where a guard was absolutely necessary, and suspicious where cause in reality least existed. No circumstance, no event, could remove the film of error; conviction never could reach this self-opinionated female, even had it been essayed by the argumentative powers of a Cicero. Yet, barring this

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frailty of human nature, which gave tenacious irritability to her temper, Mrs. Moreland was both an affectionate wife and a zealous friend.

Having said thus much, however, of the leading characteristics of this wedded pair, it will not be imagined that either of these personages could have influenced the decision of Lady Darnford, relative to the selection of a mansion over which they presided, for the asylum of the orphan heiress, although even for the short intervening space of time which was destined to elapse ere the promised return of her brother to England. The secret influence which directed this arrangement, existed in the person of a widowed aunt of Dr. Moreland. Mrs. Mulgrave had, for very many preceding years, been a resident at Sudley Hall: this lady was the relict of a general officer in the British service; her age was, at this epoch, very advanced, but, in the earlier part of life, she had mixed with the world in all its busy stages, and possessed

in

in reality that portion of strong judgment, and accurate discrimination, which Mrs. Moreland vaunted: her active mind was an exhaustless mine of intellectual, as well as worldly knowledge; and divested of those prejudices too generally attached to age, she was a singular instance of liberality of opinion, connected with tried and dear-bought experience.

Zitella had, almost from infancy, been distinguished as the favourite of Mrs. Mulgrave; that peculiar character which her disposition, even in childhood, displayed, had excited the interested observation of this superiorly-gifted woman, whose affectionate notice and regard were calculated to please, and even flatter, her little visitor, who had never appeared more animated and gratified than when her aged friend imparted some desultory lesson in geography, or taught her how to repeat any little fabled versification adapted to her years. With the further expansion of juvenile faculty, the interest attached to

this dear girl did not lessen, each day but, on the contrary, lent strength to its existence, and a decided partiality for the child gradually ripened into matured affection. Thus, from the kind regard and accompanying instruction of Mrs. Mulgrave, the Countess anticipated every advantage to Lady Zitella, more especially at that critical moment, when the frock is superceded by the more womanly appendage of the gown, and, with the discarded garb of childhood, the youthful enterprizer fancies she has sunk all that imbecility generally attached to it; and, piquing herself upon her own fancied maturity of reason as well as years, by thoughtless security adds to the dangers which surround her inexperienced course.

Twelve months had rolled on the orbit of time, and presented the anxiously-expected period of the promised arrival of Mr. Nugent, when a letter from that gentleman arrived, still bearing the date of Bengal: it was addressed to Lady Zitella Herbert,

Herbert, and contained many expressions of regret for the death of his valued sister, Lady Darnford, which intelligence had then just reached him; to which was annexed the intimation of much concern at being compelled, by affairs of moment, to remain until the following season in India, when he hoped decidedly to commence his voyage to England. Meanwhile he recommended to his niece to solicit permission of the Moreland family, to her remaining their visitor for the few months longer which would necessarily intervene ere he could reach England.

As happy in her present asylum as, under existing circumstances of affliction for the death of a beloved parent, the affectionate Zitella could feel, she experienced no great regret at the postponement of the voyage of her uncle; and having received a warm and pressing invitation of continued residence at Sudley Hall, from the excellent physician and his really friendly partner, her Ladyship wrote to

Mr. Nugent in terms expressive of her concurrence in his advice, and the consequent resolution to await his return in Dorsetshire, in preference to repairing to the seat of her other guardian, Lord Edgeworth, who, immediately upon being informed of Mr. Nugent's detention in India, had written to propose the removal of Lady Zitella Herbert to his mansion in Wiltshire, should any wish be entertained by her to quit the family of Moreland.

The Doctor, about this period, was in expectation of a visit from the Dean of L—— and his lady, the latter of whom claimed affinity to the Moreland family; and a letter at length arrived from the travelling party, fixing the following week for the execution of their long-promised excursion to Sudley Hall.

This information afforded some little change to the uniformity of a retired country life, and, with no trifling degree of curiosity, Zitella anticipated the arrival of the dean's lady, whom she had never

yet

yet seen, but whom fashion's world had created an idol of popularity, at least with the male part of its creation.

Seated around the cheerful fire, at the social Christmas epoch, when family concord (if we may judge from the country custom of assembling connexions) seems the peculiar order of the day, the really amiable trio of the Moreland family, with the youthful heiress, passed the hours in the happy converse of hilarity and peace, where "*the feast of reason and the flow of soul*" gave it those intellectual charms which the imperious mandate of fashion has, in some degree, banished from her own court, without offering one firm auxiliary in place of the long-deposed supporters. The cheerful argumentative discussion which arose between these estimable individuals, was, however, occasionally interrupted, by the sudden change of countenance, which proclaimed an almost painful stretch of the aural faculty to some distant sound that might attach to the ap-

proach of the expected visitants. Nine o'clock, however, was pointed by the faithful time-piece on the table, and already expectation had sunk into that kind of stupor which often attends its tedious prolongation, when the loud bark of Carlo, the cherished spaniel of the family, and the sonorous bell of the lodge, announced the arrival of travellers. Quick rolled the wheels of the landaulette round the lawn, and a few more minutes presented the very reverend divine and the vaunted Mrs. Ancaster.

Under the latter appellation, a light, pretty, agile figure, appeared, accompanied by a face more than pleasing, yet less than handsome; there was something unaffectedly easy in the air with which she entered, and a kind of careless grace in the salutation, which was undefinably pleasing, without partaking of that interest, the offspring alone of energetic nature, which could attract our Zitella beyond the moment.

Strangely

Strangely contrasted were the mutual acknowledgments of a first presentation which passed between these two individuals: the curtsey of Mrs. Ancaster was careless, yet profound, it was the deference of the woman of fashion to superior rank, while the very ease of that deference evinced her habitual intercourse with its highest stages; but the bend of Lady Zitella marked her character, it partook of all its features, dignified by a grace that rendered it strikingly elegant and impressive.

The attention of Mrs. Ancaster was momentarily arrested; but Carlo, at that instant, pranced upon the visitor, to evince his welcome recognition of an old friend, and, patting his head with the same sweet smile as had before been extended to the more rational part of the company, she seated herself with a kind of courteous *nonchalance*, at which it seemed strangely fastidious to be displeased.

Perhaps there is nothing so tedious and perplexing as that first half hour in which relatives meet together after an absence of many months, when neither of them feel any particular interest in the welfare of the other: after the first family-enquiries of customary form, a strange uncomfortable pause must ensue; for, to commence with light foreign matter of conversation, seems to argue too clearly the real apathy of the feelings, and therefore imagination is strained to create somewhat which may appear connected with family individuality; at least this observation holds on a visit to country cousins. But although this was apparent amid the female part of the circle, it did not extend to the Dean of L—— or Dr. Moreland, who experienced mutual satisfaction in the renewal of former habits of friendship.

"I am sorry," observed Mrs. Moreland, after a pause, "that your daughter, Mrs. Ancaster, has not accompanied you, since, independent

independent of my own gratification in seeing her, I should have experienced much pleasure in presenting my little favourite to Lady Zitella Herbert."

"Indeed, my dear friend, I was much disappointed in not having the ability of bringing her hither, in compliance with your kind invitation to that effect; but Marian's health has, of late, been very tender, and the mild air of Clifton has been so strenuously advised by our family-physician, that I was compelled to surrender my own inclinations to her individual benefit, and have dispatched her to the recommended village, under the care of her good friend and governante, Mrs. Morgan; indeed I fear the next winter will make a severe trial of her constitution, in emerging from retirement into the dissipation of a London *debût*."

"Is she not *very* young as yet to appear in the great world?" said Dr. Moreland; "or does time so swiftly run, that I have lost

lost a part of his movement, and retrace fewer years than really appertain to the life of Miss Ancaster?"

"No," replied the divine, "she has not yet completed the anniversary of her fifteenth annual course; but Mrs. Ancaster is a mother so tenderly attached, that she feels unhappy in being separated from her daughter for so long a time as a winter *séjour* in our gay metropolis necessarily occasions, and she is likewise anxious that our dear Marian should partake in those pleasures she herself enjoys."

A soft smile played over the features of Mrs. Ancaster, as her eyes, at this moment, turned on the dean.

"Nothing," continued the speaker, "but the wish to greet her present friends, could have induced Alicia to be now separated from our little girl. Mrs. Ancaster is too affectionate a parent for this fashionable epoch: I have forewarned her, that if she maintains her present appellation of

la

la bonne femme et la bonne mère, she will be excluded, by unanimous voice, from all circles of *haut-ton,* lest example should prove dangerous, and fashion tremble for her apostate."

"Behold what a Corydon I yet enchain!" exclaimed Mrs. Ancaster, with winning complacency of feature, "since the husband has not even yet discarded the lover, in his too flattering panegyric."

Lady Zitella, who really began to imagine that she had evinced injustice in not feeling more satisfied with the redoubtable and celebrated Alicia Ancaster, whose domestic virtues were united to popular admiration, now addressed her more particularly, in the wish to obtain a further knowledge of an individual who appeared to be so deservedly esteemed; but although the perfect good-breeding of polished society was preserved in her manner, yet it was so monotonously passive, and so uninterestedly careless, that again our heroine marvelled why this female should be the

object

object of applause to the gay world; for she was fully aware, that mere domestic virtues were not calculated to celebrate a *St. James's belle.*

Ennui pervaded the supper-table, yet Mrs. Ancaster usurped not the airs of fashionable insolence—no arrogance of self-superiority, no disgust at the country fireside; courteously she listened to each who addressed her, although she certainly seemed to have forgotten it was necessary to afford aid to conversation; and with the same soft complacency with which her first arrival had been distinguished, she tendered the nocturnal salutation, when the *coterie* prepared to separate for their respective apartments.

Lady Zitella Herbert and Mrs. Mulgrave lingered last, and the eyes of the former were still thoughtfully fixed on the seat recently filled by Mrs. Ancaster, as if imagination had again embodied the fair occupier therein.

"Well, my dear girl," said Mrs. Mulgrave,

grave, "have you been so fascinated with our visitor as to be lost in her remembrance?"

Zitella hesitated—"I should feel much gratified by your individual opinion, my dear Madam, might I venture to enquire it; for myself, I can, as yet, scarcely venture to form one, my knowledge has been so transient, so——"

"Delicate, my young friend, in repeating it, on account of the connexion that subsists in this family; but your countenance is more eloquent than your lips, and that bears no favourable impression on its surface. But be not hasty in forming conclusions; Nature has endowed you with the precious gift of understanding, but experience alone can cement the union of judgment; and *judgment*, my dear Zitella, is the most useful quality of the mind—it is a compound of penetration and discrimination: these are allies of superior consequence in a *sejour* amid the busy world; the former teaches us to descry the vices

and

and virtues of those with whom we associate, the latter, to analyze the motives and circumstances to which they owe their rise. Were you doomed to move in a more retired, a more humble sphere of life, youth might pass with greater happiness, divested of powers to unmask the treachery, the deception, of others; but, doomed for the dangerous element of a Court, that innocence which results from ignorance of vice rather than the existence of virtue, that *naïveté* which springs from a failure of reflection, and that credulity consequent to thoughtless juvenility, act but as dangerous incitements to error—a sanction even the world admits for deviation from rational propriety in their blooming possessor; but danger lurks beneath the garb. The individual who, on every side, hears the exclamation of 'What enchanting *naïveté!*' when she commits a barbarism in manner, or a solecism in correctness, naturally fancies her very errors attractive, at least conceives they may with impunity be

be continued: but you, my dear Lady Zitella, will never fall into this egregious folly; for, in averting it from you, the Countess has even touched on the contrary extreme—she has engrafted on your mind a suspicious apprehension of concealed depravity, that, I fear, will embitter the happy days of early youth. The era of confident security, short as it ever proves, has yet such distinguished charms, that I almost fear sacrificing it, to ward off the painful lesson of personal experience, if we do not pay a price fully commensurate to the value. Suffer then, my dear child, the candour of your natural disposition to equipoise this tutored suspicion, and view each character that may dare to cross your path of life; with penetration, but not distrust: the study will prove, to a mind reflective as yours, of considerable pleasure —it will strengthen your understanding, invigorate your ideas, and form your judgment in the most unerring mould. Let your hours of varied dissipation be not

wholly

wholly idle; employ them in examining the trifling stimulus to the actions of each worldly votary; investigate their motives, which you may generally obtain from the analization of countenance and manner, even in the routine of common adventure, and you will then easily trace the complexion of motives which appertain to more important deeds; for it is from trifles alone we can best develop the human character, since few are sufficiently systematic hypocrites to take the troublesome precaution of masking their foibles, however they may subscribe to the necessity of veiling their vices.

" Commence, then, with our present inmate; remember, I absolve you from delicacy of restriction, in regard to the subsisting connexion; all I require, is the annihilation of prejudice, and the full play of native candour; and when you have had opportunity to completely decypher the claims of Mrs. Ancaster to pre-eminence, in the separate and distinct charac-

ters

ters of a wife and a belle, I will impart to you a little memoir of the individual, which, although it boasts no strange marvellous incident, and may be comprised in as few words as most family histories, yet will add cause to the effect produced. And now, my sweet reflector, adieu for the night."

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Ah! vainly wise, the moral muse hath sung,
That suasive hope hath but a syren tongue.

CAMPBELL.

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Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young and inexperienced mind into, still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it.

BURNS.

Premature Prudence.

"WERE Alicia Ancaster very handsome," thought the young observer, as she slowly reached her chamber, "were she very agreeable, very witty, very vivacious, very seductive in manner, I should not be surprised at the renown of this envied idol of man's

man's admiration ; but, in reality past the bloom of youth, although still bearing the appearance of greater juvenility than that to which her years entitle her, and disdaining the slightest personal art in regard to complexion or figure ; yet, at the utmost, Mrs. Ancaster has only a countenance that teems with harmony of sweetness, while even that very harmony, to me, appears but a pliancy of disposition, that sweetness but the insipidity of indifference : I will, however, observe her again, ere I determine ;" and, pressing the pillow with her lovely cheek, Zitella soon buried all remembrance of Mrs. Ancaster in a sound and tranquil slumber.

As the breakfast-hour had not yet sounded its diurnal summons when Lady Zitella Herbert had equipped herself in her morning robe, she wandered on the lawn to beguile the intervening minutes, and in fact at length extended her promenade, by a ramble over the grounds of Sudley, until she reached the extremity of an adjoining copse,

copse, where she encountered the Dean of L——, who appeared to be similarly engaged in a solitary expedition. He immediately joined, on perceiving her vicinity; and our heroine having been wholly engrossed by a survey of his lady the preceding evening, might be almost said to see the very reverend divine for the first time.

If his was a countenance which bore little pious solemnity, it at least glowed with an expression of strong and vivid feeling; if his were manners not calculated to create awe even in the pulpit, yet there was a mind which appeared to acknowledge the full efficacy of religious duty, although its practice was not always as correct as was consistent with his own expressed wishes; for it was in compliance with the inclinations of Mrs. Ancaster, and not the gratification of his own, which drew him amid the dissipated haunts of the London world, a part at least of each successive winter. Endowed with a cultivated

understanding,

understanding, strong affections, moral sentiments, and great suavity of manners, the Dean of L—— was an object of general esteem, although the light fulfilment of his clerical duties rendered him a less respected character than ought to have appertained to a dignitary of the church; and there were many of his friends, who, while they paid the full tribute of regard and consideration for the amiable morality of his life and lips, had yet fears for the misapplication of that mitre, which was expected shortly to grace the brow of Ancaster.

The conversation accidentally turned upon Alicia, and the theme appeared to lend peculiar animation to the Dean: the warm enthusiasm of the lover seemed yet to reign in the plaudits of the husband; but, conscious of the involuntary strength of his own expressions, he smiled at a review of what he had uttered, and conjured Lady Zitella not to be too severe upon his unfashionable panegyric; then, changing

the subject, he enquired the destined period of the expected arrival of Mr. Nugent, whom he mentioned as having formerly had the honour of knowing.

"Indeed I hope, in the close of the advancing year," replied our heroine; "for, however happy I feel in the society of the estimable family with whom I now reside, yet apprehensions will intervene for the fate of my only surviving relative, while an immeasurable ocean separates us; since, although too young, when I last saw him, to retain strong personal regard, yet, viewing him as the fond affectionate brother of my dear mother, and the delegated protector of myself, I cannot avoid experiencing much anxiety. His health has, I understand, suffered, latterly, much from the climate of India, and I therefore naturally dread a longer continuance in a country which has been the grave of so many European constitutions."

The countenance of the Dean, which had hitherto been illumined by an expression of

of the most consummate happiness, became suddenly clouded, as our heroine spoke; something resembling agitation disturbed the serenity of his manner, and, in a hollow tone, he pronounced—"It has indeed been the grave of many."

A momentary pause ensued, suddenly broken by the Dean himself observing, and pointing out, some immediate objection to the landscape before them, which at once turned the conversation from the Indian shore.

Upon entering the breakfast-room, the ramblers found the family party assembled, with the addition of Mr. Clifden, the village lawyer, a gentleman who, in self-importance at least, held a claim to supereminence. Mrs. Ancaster, half reclined in her chair, complained of a tormenting headache, and occasionally applied for relief to a small enamelled bottle of *eau-de-luce*, suspended round her neck by a beautiful Lisbon chain, which seemed to yield to the remedy quite as much ornament as

use. Her replies to each individual of the circle, were mellowed with ineffable sweetness of voice and manner, but she essayed not to start or support a single topic of conversation.

"The present party, I hope, purpose attending the assizes ball," at length articulated the little sprig of the law, after a general silence of some moments—"it will be quite a superior thing; the county is now well filled with its first families, and, on such an occasion, *all*, of course, will assemble, to *grace* the festive scene."

"That festivity, my dear Sir," rejoined Dr. Moreland, "prevails at such a moment, the instance you have just alluded to evinces; and yet, to a reflective mind, it appears scarcely possible, that an epoch should be *selected* for mirth and hilarity, which is marked by the miseries of our fellow-creatures, or the punishment of depravity in the human species; better would it be, that we set it peculiarly apart to attempt enforcing the inculcation of morality

and

and virtue among our less-enlightened and uncultivated poor, while the public mind is duly impressed, and the awful arm of retributive justice is suspended over the culprit who has infringed her laws. Surely, surely, this is not the hour wherein to celebrate the orgies of Momus! Methinks I see the agonized wife hanging in despair over the doubtful issue of a husband's trial; the tortured parent awaiting the morrow, in all the horror of suspense, that morrow, fraught with the fate of a son, who, however guilty, is still remembered as his offspring, the fondled infant of his early youth, the first pledge of connubial love!"

"Oh! in pity, cease, my good Sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Ancaster, "and do not conjure up so terrific a catalogue of the dismal, as you really will deprive your friends of all amusement at the forthcoming ball."

"You incline, then, to form one of the assembly?" said Mrs. Moreland.

"Certainly I shall be happy to accom-

pany, or perhaps, if you still maintain your dereliction to balls, I may prove useful as a *chaperon* to Lady Zitella Herbert."

"Her Ladyship does not go into public," said the Doctor hastily; "she awaits the arrival of her uncle, ere she makes her *debût*. A charge of such magnitude committed to my care, renders me particularly cautious for her appearance in society; and in compliance with my wishes, or rather apprehensions, Lady Zitella has kindly consented, whatever may be her inclination, which, to own the truth, has never been consulted, to continue in total retirement, until the return of Mr. Nugent."

"Behold one of the miseries of an heiress!" said Mrs. Ancaster, laughing—"were your Ladyship a less precious treasure, either from a failure in personal or golden attraction, you might then, with impunity, taste the pleasures of a ball. Thank Heaven, I never was an heiress! 'all for love' could alone have been the motto of my knight-errant; nor had I even beauty to attract:

attract: and Cupid must have rendered his victim as blind as himself, when he stamped poor Alicia's image on his heart."

"Happy Alicia!" thought Zitella, "thrice happy, in the conviction of having inspired a pure and disinterested passion in the breast of him who claims a husband's dearest title!"

The ball was forgotten, the remembrance of the last admonitions of her mother alone rested on the mind of our heroine, and a sigh closed the painful impression, that she might never know the happiness of a disinterested, individual affection; "at least," she added, "heavy clouds of *doubt* must ever lower over my horizon of love."

The following day, Mrs. Moreland, feeling the necessity of subscribing to the inclinations of her guest, made arrangements for attending the assize ball; and the Doctor, although reprobating the practice, was too much accustomed to acquiesce in the wishes of his *cara sposa,* not to be finally persuaded to form one of the party; although we must do the benevolence of his

heart the justice to affirm, that it suffered far more pain than pleasure in the destined assignment of the evening hours.

Lady Zitella Herbert and Mrs. Mulgrave were consequently left to the enjoyment of a *tête-à-tête;* and the aged monitress, upon observing her young friend listening with silent attention to the receding wheels of the carriage which conveyed away the ball party, thus addressed her:—"I grieve for your disappointment, my dear girl, in an exclusion from the gay amusements of this evening; but I am convinced you properly appreciate the necessity of the present conduct of Dr. Moreland."

"Indeed I do, my dear Madam, most painfully discern it; and the cause affects me far more than the effect."

"Ah, my love, you will soon be reconciled to the cause, when other effects are produced from it. The splendour of your *debût,* the flattering homage of all around, the universal voice of adulation, and that little minutia of attention, so adroitly mingled

gled in that deference which will be paid, will administer a kind of enchanted happiness, that human optics cannot penetrate."

"No, ah no!" exclaimed Zitella—"I shall rather feel myself but as a cypher, whose golden characters alone attract the eyes of observation. Can I know myself a selected dupe for the idle homage of mercenary man, the goal of the mere fortune-hunter's ambition, and yet be happy? No, Madam; the only stimulus which renders me anxious to emerge from seclusion, is the wish to hold out a useful lesson, and teach imperious man, that the female mind has strength to pierce the flimsy veil of flattery, to discern its source, and reject the deceitful homage of mercenary passion; to teach the vain pretender, that the female bosom may contain a heart, whose conquest is unattainable by such ignoble, unworthy artifice."

"Oh, Zitella! this language is the sophistry of pride; it may blaze awhile, but love will eventually overturn the impe-

rious fabric of mental defiance with one touch of his magic wand, and bestow his own vivid tints to the colouring of surrounding objects."

"Love!" repeated Zitella, and contempt hung upon her lip, while the heightened bloom of her cheek yielded force to the reiteration of the word—"*love!* Mrs. Mulgrave, I imagined, I had flattered myself, you had already known this proud tenant better;" and, placing her hand with energy on her heart, "May it cease to beat, ere it tamely bend to a pusillanimous, unworthy attachment! for, if reason must be the sacrifice, then, oh love! be thou ever an alien to my bosom!"

Tears filled the eyes of Mrs. Mulgrave—"Alas, my child, I fear thy firmness; thy sensibility is far too acute for this security: the haughtiness of thy soul may war with the softer inclinations of thy heart awhile, but thou wilt suffer, I fear, severely, from the mingled extremes of thy character."

"No, my respected friend; the extremes of

of my character will, I trust, like the distant poles, turn faithful on the same axis, and that axis will, I yet hope, be reason. Born and educated in rural seclusion, I still, from the kind precepts of a mother, have been saved from the romantic sentimentality of passion; her sad history has convinced me, that matured esteem is the only firm basis of a rational, happy attachment. In my *search for a husband*, therefore," she added, with a faint smile, "I trust, the mantle of folly attached to Cupid, will not enwrap my judgment: I have been taught circumspection, by the cruel lesson of a parent's wedded misery."

"Yes, Zitella; but remember to mark strongly the line between circumspection and fastidiousness; do not suffer the head entirely to take the lead, and act independently of the heart, when the cold reasoning of the former would annihilate the feelings of the latter—the mind may have visionary speculations, quite as erring as the vital tenement: a palace of truth is not

formed for an earthly territory; human frailty will prevail, even in the most exalted characters; and, like the Phanor of De Genlis, we may too late discover, we have refined away contentment, in a vain search after perfection. That passion which arises merely from personal admiration, and in fact is but the love of the eyes, not of the heart, will never, I am convinced, take effect on you, else I should strengthen your present impressions; but I well know, *mind* will be a first requisite in your destined partner; and I am also aware, that, destitute of it, an Adonis were impotent to assail your affections. I am likewise sensible, that your delicacy is not likely to subscribe to the absurd and trite maxim, of a reformed rake making the best husband; and therefore it is I can venture to inspire somewhat more leniency into your estimate of mankind, than I would venture to extend to almost any other young woman under similar circumstances. I am no proselyte to romance; its frolic

vagaries

vagaries may have amused, but have never deluded me; its vivid colouring has attracted, but never deceived me: yet I would view this intuitive emotion of the bosom even in a moral light. As a sentiment, this potent love has degenerated into the sickly morbidness of perverted fancy; as a passion, it lures to criminality; but, as a feeling, it is one of the noblest emotions of the breast; and Heaven surely formed the human heart for its reception, even from the first stage of man's creation; for, in the joys of paradise, this social affection was sanctioned. Let not woman then presumptuously defy this intuitive inmate, but rather let her guard the soil where it springs, with a fence of protecting virtues, that no subtle pretender may gain entrance through any weak or unguarded avenue, but preserve it for a lawful monarch, who, bowing to the controul of religion and morality, acknowledges their supremacy; and the territory, under such dominion, may "flourish in immortal youth."

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Most arts require long study and application; but the most useful art of all, that of pleasing, requires only the desire.

CHESTERFIELD.

Modern Chit-chat, or a great Deal expended on Nothing.

HAVING retired to rest long before the hour that the ball party reached the Hall, Zitella, the next morning, felt a natural curiosity to receive, from Mrs. Ancaster, some account of the evening's amusement, and anticipated much pleasure in its gratification; it was therefore with some disappointment that our heroine heard the apologies of fatigue, on the part of that lady, for not attending the breakfast summons. Mrs. Moreland, however, informed her, that the curate

curate of the village, his wife and daughter, as also two military friends of Mrs. Ancaster, had been invited to dine with them that day.

In a mansion where retirement had, for ages, uniformly prevailed, even this small party was an event that occasioned some little commotion in the household. Mrs. Mulgrave, who had been inured to the public life the house of a commanding officer necessarily presents, smiled at the importance attached to the arrival of the bidden guests; while Lady Zitella, having, for many months, resided in the dissipated abode of her father, and still bearing in remembrance the crowded dinner-parties of his noble connexions, of which she had injudiciously been suffered to become a member, experienced no timid apprehension, no fearful tremour, at the arrival of the expected strangers; although novelists usually conceive these as indispensible attractions to a lovely heroine, "*blushing with terror*" at the return of a bow, or

"*dumb with alarm*" at the most common expressions of gallantry.

Lady Zitella Herbert, with a goodly portion of that commodity styled vanity, had yet not sufficient to imagine every man who addressed her with complimentary elegance, inspired by passion, and therefore could very composedly receive, and reply to language that she estimated with proper indifference. Fully aware of the higher orbit in which hereditary distinction placed her, she felt the anxious and laudable desire to fill her station with that dignity of character, which might yield *real* elevation to mere heraldic distinction.

"What an unaccountable heroine!" many a sylvan sentimentalist will naturally exclaim—"not a trace of *naïveté*, no dear interesting timidity, no sweet innocent ignorance, which *we* all admit as its first ingredients."

To such an assertion, what dare I reply? Shall I presume to overturn the established rules of the novelist school, and venture

to

to produce a heroine who violates its imperious statutes?—Ye votaries of *novelty*, on you I rely for support, in this dereliction from antecedent custom, since the *naïveté* composed of *such* ingredients, is a stranger to the young Zitella: she will never create a duel between her lovers, from ignorance of the most common regulations of society; she will never faint at the rudeness of a fashionable stare, nor will she repeat to any man she loves him, in the perfect ignorance that she is tendering encouragement by the profession; and, what is still more unaccountable, she will never adopt any expression of equivocal phraseology, that may tend to raise a blush on the cheek of a more experienced female, while, with the smile that evinced perfect comprehension of her own allusion, assures her sage admonisher, she had erred from "*pure naïveté.*" An intuitive delicacy will protect the language of Zitella from impropriety; rational observation, her manner from rusticity; unaf-

fected,

fected, but not simple; true modesty, but not bashful timidity, is the resident of her heart.

Behold, then, this strange heroine of our memoir enter the drawing-room where the guests were assembling, supporting the infirm steps of Mrs. Mulgrave, without the slightest emblem of embarrassment or confusion. The old-fashioned country custom of presentation yet appertaining to Sudley Hall, the appellations of "Major Hammond," and "Captain Fletcher," were attached to the military visitants in that ceremony.

The Rev. Mr. Gifford and his worthy partner, had been long known to Lady Zitella Herbert, but the daughter had been absent, for the last four months, at Bath, with the Lady of Sir Cecil Farnham, Lord of the manor, and had only returned the preceding week into Dorsetshire; her Ladyship having conceived, that giving a fine, shewy, *animated* girl, the run of a Bath season, in the hope her face would purchase

chase a husband, was a most laudable act of charity. Scarcely could Zitella, however, now recognize a former acquaintance, the playfellow of her childish sports, in the present Miss Gifford, whose fashionable, though not decent, habiliments, *rouged* cheeks, and tonish effrontery of manner, little accorded with the plain, unassuming dress and demeanour of her far more respectable parents.

With the recognition of a former friend, the hand of Zitella was involuntarily extended; but the confident familiarity, the offensive assurance, of a girl who had been suddenly introduced, by the folly of her benefactress, into a sphere of life little calculated to promote her real advantage, so completely disgusted her former companion, that an involuntary reserve, a repellant retreat, from renewed intimacy, suddenly succeeded her first spontaneous cordiality. The superficial observer might have imputed this change of conduct to the pride of rank; but Mrs. Mulgrave, who

analyzed

analyzed each movement of the heart of her young friend, traced therein no haughty distance to the curate's daughter, but a disgust to the character of her who bore that appellation.

Major Hammond and Captain Fletcher were engaged more immediately in conversation with the Dean of L—— and Dr. Moreland, when their attention was suddenly diverted by the entrance of Mrs. Ancaster. Her hair, naturally fine, was dressed with a simplicity that aided the general juvenility of her appearance; and her bosom, improved by the auxiliary of a fashionable *corset,* was covered with a lace shirt, of such delicate texture, that it benefitted the complexion, without concealing the form of a bosom, which was certainly the only critical personal attraction of Mrs. Ancaster. The pristine languor of her eyes was superceded by the animation of unaffected pleasure, which gave to her winning smile more of soul and expression than it had heretofore displayed.—

The

The simplicity of her address was unchanging, and the most invincible good humour gave a heightened charm to every feature; while, for the first time since her entrance into Sudley Hall, conversation gained an auxiliary in her efforts for its support.

Major Hammond was one of those guests who, for the first day, are entertaining; the second, amusing; and, the third, insipid. He had a few ready *bon mots*, a few light anecdotes, a few set phrases, and a few ready compliments; but such ammunition could not last long, and, when once expended, this military magazine was exhausted.

The character of Captain Fletcher was like the symbol of eternity, with neither a beginning nor an end; and, like most undeviating rounds, formed *nothing*.

We have ushered this gentleman into our narrative with a simile, in compliance with his own inclinations for that metaphorical illustration, since his compliments swam

swam in the luxury of this poetic embellishment, and unfortunately never failed to appear most ironical, when most exerted to convey real intended approbation. But Captain Fletcher boasted the originality of his compliments; and this claim to supereminence was not likely to be disputed by his brother officers, who, however, felt no inclination to repress that ridiculous hyperbole of gallantry, which afforded the mirthful amusement of many a festive and convivial hour.

After the first general conversation, the Major, addressing Mrs. Ancaster, informed her, that, soon after her departure from Bath, he had the honour of seeing her sister, then just arrived in that city.

"And greeted the fair as beautiful as ever, no doubt?" said Mrs. Ancaster.

"Yes, a very Medician statue!" replied Hammond, with a half smile, that left it doubtful whether it meant to compliment the perfect symmetry, or satirize the inanimate coldness, of the lady in question.

"All

"All Bath were in ecstacies, I conclude," rejoined the former; "Lady Dorville was doubtless the object of universal interest and attention?"

"No, my dear Madam, simply of attention; interest had fled with her Ladyship's sister," and the Major bowed with infinite address to the object of his indirect gallantry.

"Thou uncourteous mortal!" exclaimed Mrs. Ancaster, affecting to misinterpret the declaration, "thus openly to avow, that Bath was rejoiced to be freed from a being so little ornamental as myself, and were unanimously interested in my departure! But, alas! my sister and myself were indeed never formed to move in the same hemisphere."

"Indeed I think not," said Fletcher—"you are distant as the orbs of day and night. Lady Dorville, like the moon, yields a light, beautiful, though cold and wan, which imparts no genial warmth; although it shines with ethereal brilliance, the eyes

of

of man may contemplate it fearless, with a stedfast admiring survey: but, like the dazzling globe of morning, you impart life and animation to creation; mortal vision, when presumptuously raised to you, is overpowered by your brilliance; yet is nature invigorated by your vivid powers!"

The laugh of Mrs. Ancaster was infinitely natural, as she received this glowing effusion wholly in the ridiculous. "Now I really give you great credit, Captain Fletcher, for the formation of a compliment that the vainest female in creation could not misinterpret into any thing short of irony: but to think of comparing poor Lady Dorville to 'the inconstant moon,' she who is constancy's self, who never deviated to the right nor the left since she renounced her leading-strings, and who never yet lost her level, in thought, word, or deed!—But I know, from experience, you are a votary of Momus, and the spirit of ironic vivacity will never spare either friend or foe, else I had preferred a humble

ble petition, signed by the former appellation, to rescue me from this laughing satire."

"Vivacity the presence of Mrs. Ancaster never fails to inspire; but no praises, however strongly couched, can be deemed irony, when addressed to one so deservedly the universal favourite of our isle." Then, with some little alteration of a just metre, added—

"Without the smile from thy partial beauty won,
Oh! what were man?—A world without a sun!"

"Ah, gallant knight! but I fear, like Sylvester Daggerwood's orb of light, mine will be a sun *seen* behind a cloud!"

"A correct simile indeed!" subjoined Hammond; "for thy sun would pierce through every envious cloud."

"You appear to have soared to the clouds, Major, and therefore, no doubt, can expatiate at large on your new region of discovery. I only grieve you should have made a voyage to so desert an island; but, having done so, I commend you for making the best of a sorry subject."

"I did not before mention, I believe, that I had the honour of being presented to Lady Dorville, at Bath, a few weeks since," interrupted Miss Gifford, who appeared by no means pleased to behold the two military beaux engrossed by Mrs. Ancaster, and embraced this method of joining in the conversation, at all events.

"Were you indeed?" was the careless reply; and again the envied wife turned towards her male auditors; but one had already taken his seat, at some distance, next Lady Zitella Herbert.

Upon perceiving this arrangement, she immediately exclaimed — "You were a most admirable shield, Captain Fletcher; for, like most benefits received, I did not know your full value until I had lost you: but this fire absolutely scorches me; therefore, pray give me a substitute for your good offices, in that screen."

The obedient Fletcher rose, and with alacrity handed the useful appendage, when

when he was again returning to his seat by Zitella, but was arrested by the exclamation of, "Ah, Heavens! in pity, remove it!" and, covering her eyes with infinite playful grace, the fair speaker continued—"I could not support so direful an object before my sight, for the universe!—Dear Mrs. Moreland, what Gothic ancestor could have had the barbarous, callous heart, to work poor Daniel in the lion's den on this antique frame?—It is, in every respect, a *cruel* work," she added, alluding to the worsted performance—"the very sight of the ravenous animals is electrifying; and I absolutely tremble at the long white teeth of the senior-looking gentleman."

"Then, for once," said Fletcher, "let me boast of being the ægis of Pallas;" and, instantly removing the screen, took that station himself.

"And you really then consider yourself a less disagreeable object than the terrific lords of the forest?" resumed Mrs. Ancas-

ter, without however dissenting from the movement.

"A less dangerous one, at least," was the reply.

"That is a very modest declaration, for the present day; and I delight to welcome that *rara avis*, whenever it appears."

"Give us credit, however, for our attempts; for we were at least willing to amuse you, by a sight of the lions of this neighbourhood," said the Doctor good-naturedly, having actually removed the innocently-offending screen yet farther into the background; "so do not, I implore, be too severe on the exhibition."

"Indeed, my dear friend, you know not how highly I estimate your kind intentions; but I have always had a natural antipathy to lions, of every description."

"Except lions of the field," said Miss Gifford pertly, while she looked significantly towards the military heroes.

"Thanks, my fair friend, for your exal-

tation,"

tation," said Fletcher; "the mighty bard of old transformed us into '*dogs of war*,' but you have elevated us to royal similitude with a monarch, at once renowned for courage and magnanimity."

"I fear Shakespeare knew us better though," said Hammond laughing, "and foresaw the puppies into which our race would degenerate, when he gave us for our ancestors, '*the dogs of war*."

"My dear Sir," said the erudite Mrs. Moreland, who had no idea of an attempt to play upon any term of her immortal favourite, "you have strangely misconceived the application of that verse of Julius Cæsar, to which I imagine you must allude. In those earlier ages of barbarism, animals of that description were literally trained in the service of the state, and let loose in the field of slaughter."

"Were they indeed, my dear Madam?" said the Major, stroking his chin with affected gravity; "it is a pity you cannot

impart the art to those of our own country—the English bull-dog."

"It would be the saving of an infinitude of puppies, no doubt," said Mrs. Mulgrave a little angrily, "according to your own appropriation of the title, Major Hammond."

"Nay, my dear Madam," rejoined Zitella, "now you are severe; but, since the days of our unfortunate Charles, the descendants of Britain have been more inclined to exterminate than encourage the savage warfare."

"I never disparage the scarlet race," said Mrs. Ancaster, "since it would be the extreme of ingratitude in me to act thus, the deanry has been so much indebted to the garrison of L—— for its gaiety; but more immediately to your regiment, Major —you were the very creatures formed to amuse; dancers, singers, actors, at pleasure, 'all things by turns, and nothing long."

"What

"What a distinguishing host of perfections!" said Mrs. Mulgrave; "surely they should be immortalized, at least by female favour, so admirably are they adapted for feminine danglers: and now, in return for their kind efforts, I hope the Dean played *his part* with as just alacrity, and supported a character in his own diocese?"

"He supported his own, my dear Madam," replied Mrs. Ancaster, "and he could not have selected one that would have pleased us more."

"It did not please himself," added the Dean gravely.

"Then it was doubly kind of you," subjoined the fair Alicia, with unmoved sweetness of physiognomy, while she raised her smiling eyes to his.

The countenance of the divine softened, he tendered no reply, but advanced towards a picture that hung near a window in the further part of the room, and tendered an enquiry as to the view it represented.

"Fort William, in the settlement of Bengal," was the reply of Dr. Moreland; and, whether from fancy or reality, Lady Zitella thought she discerned a sudden change in the countenance of the Dean; at all events, he certainly turned abruptly from the picture, and, seating himself in the window, seemed lost in abstraction.

There was, in the manner of this gentleman, somewhat which interested Zitella far more than that of his lady: his disinterested, undeviating attachment, for the long-established partner of his life, was, to her, a resistless *trait* of amiability of character; for she imagined a heart, capable of honourable and generous love, to rest on the highest pinnacle of excellence, and mourned that secret source of gloom, which seemed alone to cloud the hemisphere of the most consummate wedded happiness she had yet witnessed.

The dinner summons was soon issued, and, at table, Hammond became the neighbour of Zitella. A *tête-à-tête* conversation ensued,

ensued, and she found him, what he always appeared, on first acquaintance, an agreeable and entertaining companion. Mrs. Ancaster, however, either from dislike to seeing him wholly engrossed by another, or from the more laudable motive of enlivening the party, paved the way to general conversation, by addressing those on the opposite side of the table, and soon drew universal attention on herself, by her own individual exertions to support each successive discourse, which she did with much versatility of language, displaying therein an animation very different to their former languid, laconic sentences; yet it was an animation so mellowed by a natural sweetness of countenance, that it gave lightness, but not levity, to her manner; and while she fascinated, by incessant attention, and an endeavour to please and amuse every man around her, yet, at the moment of her most marked triumphs, she disclaimed every pretension to this devotion; but, while she accepted their com-

pliments, with professed belief of their ironical tendency, in conveying undeserved praise, she smiled so sweetly on the speaker, who had before, in reality, administered the flattery of unmeaning gallantry, that the apparently-unaffected smile, and the professed diffidence of her own attraction, would have rendered her admirer displeased at the coldness of his own phraseology.

Satisfaction pervaded every countenance, but, on that of the Dean, sat the exultation of a far more tender gratification; his heart shone in his intelligent features, they beamed with unqualified, unalloyed admiration; for his heart was pregnant with the fond confidence of the husband, mingled with the enthusiastic delight of the lover; and even Miss Gifford whispered Lady Zitella, that Mrs. Ancaster was far superior to her beautiful sister.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

"For love pursues an ever-devious race,
True to the winding lineaments of grace."

.....

I watch the wheels of Nature's mazy plan.

CAMPBELL.

Eventual Effects from contradictory Causes.

MAJOR Hammond and Captain Fletcher were frequent visitors at the Hall, during the fortnight that the Ancasters were visitants at Sudley; and the time passed with unusual gaiety in the Moreland family, by this addition to their society, together with the ever-animated exertions of Mrs. Ancaster to entertain, whenever the military heroes were of the circle.

Between the Dean and Zitella, a greater degree of intimacy subsisted, than with his lady: she found him, upon farther acquaintance, a rational and instructive companion, who, without ever soaring to the higher pinnacle of brilliance, cleared the line of mediocrity, and she derived much pleasure from his conversation.

The farewell of Mrs. Ancaster was in character with her first greeting: she pressed the hand of each of her kind friends with equal tenderness, and, with much sweetness of expression, lamented that she could not, in compliance with their mutual wishes, extend her visit; then stepped into the carriage, with quite as light a step as she had first descended from it, to behold her estimable relations.

The day succeeding their departure, Lady Zitella Herbert and Mrs. Mulgrave being quietly seated in a summer-house, erected at the extremity of the garden, which was the limits of the diurnal walk of the latter, our heroine earnestly requested the long-promised

promised memoir of her new acquaintance; to which her aged friend replied—"Yes, my love, your request shall be complied with; but remember, I forewarn you to anticipate nothing strange or marvellous connected with this family history, or you will be woefully disappointed; and having thus premised, in the true narrative style, permit me to commence.

"Blanch and Alicia were the only children of Sir William Lister—a baronetage, to which a large hereditary fortune was attached, and this consequently did not advantage the females of the family, while the next male branch stood only in the relative degree of cousin, a youth who did not inherit any portion of the regard of Sir William, whose sole affections of heart and mind, as well as those of his Lady, centered in their first-born, to the total exclusion of her sister.

"From her cradle, Blanch Lister was the acknowledged offspring of beauty, I cannot say, of Venus, for her's was a face, a form,

too

too cold for the creation of the goddess of love: her appearance was well calculated for the personification of serenity, content, or peace; more than one modern sculptor had chiselled, from her features, a Grecian model, and the first artist of the day had drawn her as the sleeping beauty.

"This precise mechanism of nature extended to her mind: she had memory to retain, but no ideas to analyze; she repeated what she had learned, with correctness of diction, but she failed in ability to investigate its signification: her understanding was like a dictionary, where words are arranged in systematic order, without comprising one sentence of information collectively.

"This mere machine of beauty seemed destitute of a single active spring, and, to me, ever appeared like Patience sitting to be admired, satisfied that the issue could not be otherwise than it ever had been.

"The parental breast is particularly alive to beauties in its offspring, and this unjust distinction

distinction of the respective claimants of their regard, is too often the sole source of those family-dissentions which arise from favourite children: it was thus with both Sir William and Lady Lister, whose vanity was infinitely more vivid than that of their daughter, notwithstanding their *laudable* endeavours to plant its seeds even in the cradle of infancy; never was child more admired, more caressed, more extolled, or more adored, than Blanch; but Alicia, the neglected, the despised offspring of this unjust pair, was no bud of personal promise; and while one nourished blossom of beauty was fostered in the hot-bed of indulgence, the humble floweret, that was confused with the common many, was condemned, unsheltered, to stem the storms of life; while every effort was made by parental sternness to crush the unoffending bud, because it displayed not the rich hues of its sister plant!

"Taught to believe herself very inferior in creation, the sound of affection was a stranger

stranger to Alicia, for even the domestics in attendance soon acquired the manner and habits of their superiors; and when they beheld that the most ready access to the favour of Sir William and their Lady, was to extol the elder at the expence of the junior, they failed not to offer the advantageous homage.

"Blanch heard nought but the words of praise and adulation—Alicia none, save those of censure and contempt. The anniversary of the seventeenth year of Miss Lister was celebrated with festive splendour; the beautiful idol was then first presented to the world, and an admiring croud gazed on this mould of female perfection. She accompanied her parents to the metropolis, while the disregarded Alicia was suffered to remain in their country mansion in Suffolk, under the care of her governess, a woman who, contented with systematically attending her lessons of instruction at stated hours, suffered the intermediate ones to be passed at pleasure by

her

her neglected pupil. The heroine of my little memoir was then not sixteen; and a person which, in childhood, was just passable—an intermediate standard between beauty and plainness, had now expanded into somewhat more pleasing to the eye; while her really angelic disposition, cruelly tortured by the unfeeling contempt and unjust dislike of her relations, became tinged with a pensive despondency, that communicated its influence to her countenance, and added an interest to her features, that rendered their deficiency in critical beauty less observable.

"An interesting person is perhaps that which most irrevocably binds; beauty will ever assail the heart, but interest is the sealed magnet of the lover—it is sure to win where first it touches; and, if the conquests are fewer, those attained are more durable. Women of critically-proportioned beauty, who preserve only the cold outline of perfection, I have always remarked, in

in my journey through life, attain more admirers than devoted suitors; the former attracts the adulating gaze, but expression is the soul of love. I mean not, however, to affirm, that the countenance of Alicia partook of that varied glow of attraction; but there was an irresistible sweetness, an unaffected diffidence, that circumstance had engendered, and a natural smoothness of temper, that the harsh lesson of early misfortune had tended to foster, while the witchery of native grace threw a veil over every personal imperfection.

"Such was the junior daughter of Sir William Lister, in the meridian of youth: very many years have passed since then, yet still the resemblance lives, although its lineaments are fainter. The curate of the adjacent village of Farley was, at that time, Maurice Ancaster—you have seen him, you have conversed with him, therefore personal description were needless; but of his prospects or his family, you know

know nothing; of that therefore it may be necessary to speak, for the full completion of my simple narrative.

" He is the son of a West Indian, a man addicted to the lowest vices; profuse without generosity, ostentatious without liberality, and arrogant without dignity, he was destitute of principle, honour, or affection. His wife, an European of family and fortune, had disobliged her connexions by this erring election, and finally died of a broken heart, caused by his ill treatment, in a country where she was thrown wholly on his protection, an alien from her own friends.

" The only offspring of this marriage exists in the present divine: he was, at an early age, sent to England for his education, and has received the most liberal this country affords. At the completion of his studies, he was, by imperious mandate, again summoned to the island of Barbadoes. He returned thither, to behold his father sunk into the most abject debauch-

ery:

ery: a mulatto mistress, abandoned as himself, headed his table, a table celebrated for its Bacchanalian orgies: obscure revelry, and disgusting degradation, were the unceasing inmates of the mansion.

"Young Maurice recoiled from the abhorrent scene: his expostulations drew forth the resentment of his parent; he braved the storm awhile, but disgust and indignation operating on a quick and sensitive mind, annihilated the voice of prudence: he remonstrated in still warmer language, and was for ever expelled the paternal mansion and estates.

"With difficulty he raised a sum sufficient to carry him back to England, where, on a tried and valued friend, he yet relied: alas! ere he gained the British shore, the grave had entombed that ally, who, believing him undoubted heir to the handsome property of his father, thought not to notice him in his will, save by a ring of remembrance.

"The clerical habit had early been the decided

decided election of Ancaster; and, having taken the necessary orders, he became, through the intervention of a former collegiate acquaintance, curate of Farley, on the small annual stipend of eighty pounds; yet the heart of Maurice beat with proud exultation, at his own independence of a despicable, worthless parent.

"A similarity of fate, in some measure, seemed to connect him with Alicia Lister; both were aliens, at least to parental affection, and each became consequently interested for the other. But the hapless girl dreamed not of love; she had been depressed from every shadow of vanity, by the ridicule, the contempt, the almost abhorrence of her parents; convinced that, if the maternal bosom, by nature invested with partiality for the object of its own creation, could turn with aversion from her embrace, that less interested individuals must view her with even heightened disgust and antipathy.

"The mind of this unfortunate girl had acquired

acquired an apathetic resignation to her fate; she believed herself for ever distanced from the tenderness of love—a being formed for isolation, to whom even the affection of kindred ties was doomed to be for ever withheld. Accustomed to unkindness and neglect from her cradle, the tender assiduities of Ancaster were received with a gratitude that was unaffected and spontaneous, while she believed that pity alone influenced his attentions.

"For the curate of the lowly village of Farley to aspire to the daughter of a Baronet, seemed all that was presumptuous and absurd: but love has an invisible connexion with hope, that operates far more largely in the human breast than is generally acknowledged; it painted Alicia as the forsaken, neglected alien of her parents, who might be consequently indifferent to the inferiority of the connexion she might form, in becoming his, under existing circumstances.

"The winter had passed, and Maurice had

had again and again reviewed the fearful prospect, when the return of her parents and her sister, in the following week, was announced to the poor forsaken girl. The communication afforded pain rather than pleasure; and, in the evening of that day which had brought the intelligence, the victim of parental prejudice rambled, with melancholy step, towards the walk where she so often before had encountered the young curate.

"Another interview followed, and the communication was soon made, while the half-repressed sigh proclaimed regret at the promised return of her unnatural relatives. The heart of Maurice was softened, prudence fled before its appeal, and, with the enthusiastic warmth of a lover, he gave such energetic glowing language to his passion, that a being unused to the slightest expression of affection, or even praise, was little inclined, upon such an occasion, to accord full credence to it.—Alicia believed herself but the object of his

his amusement; a croud of suffocating emotions rushed to her heart, and a gush of tears alone relieved anguished nature. Ah, why can I not infuse into this picture the colouring of the lover himself? With what enthusiasm does he even yet retrace this scene! how vaunt of the originality and purity of that female, who, possessed of those transcendant charms his vivid preference realized, was yet divested of her sex's foibles, and could believe herself incapable of inspiring even one individual attachment!

"Vain were the professions, the expostulations of Maurice—the beloved object recoiled from those arms which sought to support, to cherish and protect her; with the velocity of lightning, she fled the man whom, she then believed, had made a mockery of her distress, and insulted her helpless state, by the ironic declaration of a passion he could never really feel.

"We delight to trace singularity in the object we love, for we always raise that peculiarity,

peculiarity, let it be what it may, to a supereminence over others. The uncommon impression of such unparalleled diffidence of her own attractions, which Alicia then unaffectedly displayed, rivetted the chains of Ancaster; but vainly, the next day, did he seek his fair mistress, in the scene of her former rambles; and to writing he had recourse, as the only alternative.

" An offer of marriage, conveyed in form, and couched with all the tenderness of genuine attachment, astonished and agitated the poor Alicia; for she was too much a novice in worldly interest, to be aware of the attraction an advantageous connexion, such as, in the projected union, might extend to an indigent curate, independent of inclination for herself; and as she again retraced her really pleasing person, adorned with the auxiliaries of youth and grace, in that mirror from which she had often turned with the sigh of regret, she viewed herself with more complacency:

still, when she recollected each admiring expression of Ancaster, complacency again vanished, and the fear of deception tinged her cheeks with the glow of offended feeling. The letter was once more perused; to investigate the deception, it was again attentively read over; but the effect did not follow; and, more than once in the day, she repeated to herself—'Beauty is in the lover's eye;' for so strongly had Alicia heard Blanch extolled for being handsome, that she, at length, literally conceived beauty an elixir of perfection.

"Those who have studied the weakness of the human heart, will easily anticipate, that Maurice was suffered to lay his proposals before Sir William Lister; but the father, whom affection could not stimulate to interest in the fate of his child, found, in pride, a voice in her election, and Ancaster was dismissed, as an insolent pretender; while Lady Lister sedulously aimed to impress on the mind of her daughter, that the superior connexion and fortune

he

he supposed attached to her, had been the sole magnet to her wily admirer.

" The effect of a belief in this expressed opinion of her parents, produced a severe and dangerous illness, that arose solely from mental distress. But the wheel of fortune now produced a most wonderful evolution, in the sudden, strange, and most extraordinary favours, that were unaccountable, at once attached to Ancaster, which, by thus removing the cause of the malady, soon caused the effect to cease.

" The poor curate of the humble village of Farley, by some enigmatical distinction of fortune, became, by unknown means, possessor of one of the most considerable livings in England, with a prospect of further ecclesiastical preferment speedily; and, even then, dared to raise his view to the lofty summit of a future see !—But, as all my sentiments on this head rest upon the dubious observation of human ken, I do not feel authorized to express whither those surmises lead; at best, vague and in-

definite they must be. The event, however, proved such as might be expected; and when Ancaster, with all the generosity of pure and unsophisticated love, renewed his proposals, with the liberal offer to receive his beloved Alicia destitute of the smallest fortune, Sir William readily closed with the wishes of the newly-installed rector; and the more especially, as it enabled him to extend a double portion to his favourite daughter, by which means he secured an alliance with the noble family of Dorville, long the object of his ambitious views.

"The two fair sisters plighted their faith on the same day, to their destined lords: Lady Dorville, with all the *sang froid* of inanity, tendered vows, which found no heart whereon to register them: a naturally phlegmatic disposition has, however, been the substitute of feeling and principle: thus chastity, without the richer tints of virtue, has evinced her an immaculate wife, but a frigid mother; while the disinterest-

ed

ed conduct of the rich and elevated rector, has destroyed every fear of the interested motives of the poor dependent curate; and the bosom of Alicia greeted its lord, with all the train of gratified happiness. It was gratitude for the generous conduct of Maurice, that first taught his elected wife, his Alicia, the wish to please; but soon this wish degenerated into an art: still viewing her person in fearful, humble light, she was solicitous to justify her husband's taste, her husband's judgment, and her husband's constant passion, by her own endeavours to become agreeable to those around. But, unfortunately for the young wife, the rectorage of B—— was situated in the vicinity of a garrison town: several of the officers of one of the regiments stationed therein, had been former acquaintance of Ancaster in the West Indies; their intimacy was renewed, the introduction of others followed, and the house of the man of God became the gay resort of the dissipated sons of war!—The voice of flattery

soon reached the ear of Alicia; at first, her heart rejected the insidious food, and, with unaffected grace, she expressed her full conviction of her own deficiency in personal attraction.

"This really *naïve* declaration gave the charm of novelty to the always-pleasing and interesting appearance of Mrs. Ancaster: men always conceive vanity annexed to woman—a faith as firmly established, as the existence of spots on the sun; and perhaps it is the only failing which the lover will admit in his mistress; but that he always discerns the existence of this, is most palpable, in the food he invariably administers to gratify it. A woman, therefore, in reality destitute of the smallest particle of this human failing, shone, like most rarities, more by its novelty than intrinsic value, and Mrs. Ancaster became the reigning toast of the garrison.

"Her wish to please, formerly a spontaneous feeling, became now a systematic study: unaccustomed even to the voice of

praise,

praise, she was the easier seduced by the fascinations of flattery; she who had never experienced attention, save from one alone, for nearly seventeen years of her life, at once beheld herself the selected idol of an admiring promiscuous croud: and the confiding husband exulted in the happiness that shone in the eyes of his Alicia; he felt the delight of having himself rescued this precious treasure from the cave of obscurity. A weak indulgence in every wish, completed the infatuation of the rector; and, from the most unpretending, Alicia became the vainest of her sex.

"But observation was not failing to retain her conquests, and she still disclaimed all personal flattery; yet it was only to rivet admiration the more strongly on her other powers of attraction. Perfectly *au fait* in the art to please, and perfectly earnest in the wish, she played on the hearts of all; but, having established her celebrity with the male sex, she has now become indifferent to interest her own; and,

while she sedulously avoids drawing forth animadversion by offence, she never now seeks to entertain *female* society, for all her powers are but to secure her empire over the lords of creation; and, with that happy facility of manner, which knows to accommodate itself to each differing disposition, she is literally, 'all things to all men:' yet, with the true Mark Antony *equivoque*, I may add, still is Mrs. Ancaster *an honourable woman;*' for her reputation, as a wife, is dear, not only from principle, but also from gratitude, to her husband, a gratitude which has preserved her virtue from taint, in that most dangerous of situations—a wedded female, suddenly and unexpectedly surrounded by admirers, and overwhlemed with the adulation and the attentions of men; neither of which, of course, were lessened, when the rector was advanced to the deanry of L——, since contingent consequence never detracts from individual distinction.

"Her temper is naturally sweet, and this cements

cements the bond of domestic happiness yet more closely—a happiness which arises, in other respects, from the partial estimate of the husband, who, blinded by an infatuated regard, sees not the shadow of frailty in the vain Alicia, but believes her almost invulnerable to error.

"Of her performance of the duties of a mother, I cannot speak from self-observation; but the life of a vain and admired female, is not calculated to aid maternal instruction, and I fear still more for the daughter than the parent suffering from such a baneful example.

"In regard to the early *debût* of Marian, I cannot divine the motive; for a rival, I am convinced, will never be endured, even in her own offspring, by Mrs. Ancaster, who is little solicitous to have the garb of juvenility superseded by a matronly appearance.

"Such, my love, is the little history of the celebrated Alicia Ancaster, for such she certainly is, an adept in the art of pleasing,

an art dangerous in the acquirement, since it too often becomes criminal."

" Many thanks, my dear Madam, for the recital; although, I confess, I have not been the dupe of Mrs. Ancaster's affected humility."

" Women, Zitella, discover dissimulation with far more facility than men; and their own sex, in general, are not likely to yield credence to their affected professions. But a fear of the imputation of envy, and the appearance of detraction, silences opinion; well convinced that man, once blinded by the fascination of a female favourite, must have '*conviction strong as proof of holy writ,*' to invalidate the firm belief of his own taste and judgment, in the impression of the real merits of the idol of his election. Mrs. Ancaster has one predominant pride; it consists in displaying to the world the husband of so many years, yet the adoring lover; and of all the triumphs of her vanity, this rages supreme. Satisfied with perfect liberty in every respect, she pays apparently

apparently only the tribute of acknowledgment to his kindness, in exhibiting his domestic amiability, when, in fact, she is only gratifying her own contemptible vanity. Yet I pity Ancaster, from my heart; blinded, as to rationality, in this wedded attachment, I view him as the victim of passion; but, I yet hope, *criminality* does not attach to his life."

Mrs. Mulgrave rose, as she concluded: the stress she had laid on the term *criminality*, and her tone of voice uniting, had awakened the surprise of our heroine, while that some mystery was connected with the source of that gloom she had, at times, traced in the countenance of the Dean, was still more confirmed, by the manner of her aged friend; and as both retraced their steps to the mansion, each seemed almost involuntarily reflective, for the silence was scarcely broken by either.

CHAP. VII.

Comforts may be procur'd, and want defied,
Heavens! with how small a sum, when right applied!
Give love and honest industry their way,
Those we term poor, shall oft that wealth obtain,
For which the ambitious sigh, but sigh in vain;
Wealth that still brightens, as its stores encrease—
The calm of conscience, and the reign of peace:
This gold may rid my heart of pains and sighs,
But her true love is still my greatest prize.

BLOOMFIELD.

The Village Church.

WITH the departure of Mrs. Ancaster, the visits of Captain Fletcher did not cease; and it soon became visible, that an individual attraction yet remained at Sudley Hall.

Mrs.

Mrs. Moreland, who piqued herself upon penetration and foresight, predicted unpleasant consequences; and, with studied solemnity, embraced the opportunity, when only Mrs. Mulgrave and Zitella were present, to mention the necessity of every discouragement being given to the young officer; expatiating at full on the slender fortune of Captain Fletcher, which would render her wealth an object of great attraction; and that, having so weighty a charge as an *heiress* under her care, it was an indispensable duty, to represent to her the folly of permitting the addresses of a race of fortune-hunters, which the good lady very liberally concluded by affirming to be the character of the military at large; while girls were too apt to be taken by their scarlet trappings, which were only assumed for the purpose of attracting weak women, and not from any real impulse of loyalty to their King, or patriotism for their country, which was an ingenious covert for their own sinister interests; and

that

that Lady Zitella ought, consequently, not to accord full credence to all the pretended rhapsodies and fine similies of Fletcher; for, as her Ladyship's zealous friend, she warned her, that an heiress could not be too reserved, since a fortune-hunter could profess love as tenderly and as enthusiastically as a better man.

Strong emotion, during this harangue, had been visible in the frame of Zitella; for although her understanding admitted it the rhapsody of prejudice, it yet contained truisms the most painful; and although the attentions, the regard of Fletcher, were objects of total indifference, yet it proved but the commencement of what she had hereafter to expect from her successive suitors; and she trembled lest her heart, in yielding to love, should lose its power of rational investigation.

Mrs. Moreland traced, in this very evident agitation, a convincing proof of interest, in regard to the attentions of Captain Fletcher; and concluded her whole

sum

sum of reflection by the determination, that every precaution should be embraced, to guard against a probable elopement. Mrs. Mulgrave, however, who was well versed in each movement of the heart of her young favourite, discovered the real source of her emotion, and smiled at the fancied happy foresight of Mrs. Moreland, who, when Lady Zitella had quitted the room, launched forth on the dangers attendant upon the continued attentions of a young man so strangely favoured; and vain was every argument of Mrs. Mulgrave, to quiet the apprehensions of the ever-opinionated lady of the mansion. It was not, therefore, until Fletcher had made, and received, a rejection of his proposals in all their due form, that she became more tranquil; and, even then, continued to affirm, that Lady Zitella Herbert certainly was attached to this military pretender, however pride had interfered in the acceptance of the matrimonial offer.

It was a few days after the rejection of this

this vain and frivolous suitor, that our heroine, accompanied by her friend Dr. Moreland, walked to the neighbouring village, at an early hour, to make some trifling purchases. When they had nearly reached the church, by which they had to pass in their ramble, their progress was impeded by a group of people assembled round the structure: the Doctor therefore enquired of a straggler, the immediate cause of the croud?

"Nothing at all, your Honour," was the reply of the rustic—"nothing at all, your Honour, of any consequence; only a wedding! Lucy Mills and Will Wilson are just gone to be married."

"And is that an event of no consequence then?" said Zitella, smiling.

"Lud, no, Miss!" said the untutored peasant, little surmising the rank of her he was addressing—"why, to be sure, not; for it happens to all folks, you know: every body that comes into the world, thinks to be married when they arrive at *marity*,

marity, you know; for there's never a Jack but there's a Gill. And so now, if a girl as how has an or'nary face-looking, why then God throws a little money into the ugly cap, and gets her a husband that way. Lud! why bean't there Nancy Gubbins, who has a squint and a hump, and yet she got more lovyers than all the girls in the village put together, the folks say; and all case why?—her father gies her fifty guineas; aye, she can count a sweatheart to every guinea in her pocket, that's what she can."

"Then I suppose she is not to be easily won," said Zitella, "and does not choose to buy her husband?"

"Lord, Miss," said the boor, grinning at the, to him, strange impression, "why how'll she get one else? No, faith; she's taking to sweathearting after Dick Fisher, the grazier's son hard by; but Dick won't ha' she, though she would ha' him, and jump for joy too."

"And

"And why not?" interrogated our heroine, who, in this, thought to trace at least one instance of disinterested conduct.

"Why, Lord, Miss, don't you know as how Dick's as fine a handsome fellow as you'd like to see; and so, when he finds John Thompson's eldest wench cast an eye at an, why, he left Nancy Gubbins, and took a'ter she: case why—he got there a pretty wench, and money too into the bargain; and so he made a tighter job of it, than with t'other rich hump."

Disappointment and disgust superseded every other impression on the features of Lady Zitella, as her heart sorrowfully whispered, that the ambition, the avarice, of a courtly sphere, could be traced even in this humble lowly village; and that it was only from the refinements of art, their respective communities were distinguished. But, at this moment, reflection was interrupted, by the advance of the wedding-party, who now issued from the holy edifice,

fice, and the two more immediate votaries of Hymen were easily discerned amid the group.

The grateful heart of the village bride immediately recognized the worthy physician, who had gratuitously attended her mother through a long and painful illness; while, by many a present of aliment that their slender purse could not reach, had contributed to alleviate the sufferings of the poor invalid.

Lucy boasted no delicate symmetry of form, her features were cast in no superior mould; but a pair of animated eyes, in which spoke a heart that knew not the refinements of disguise, gave a sparkling irradiation to a countenance, which was chastened by the blush of ingenuous nature: and although, in her rustic salutation to the estimable Doctor, there dwelt no elegance to attract the fashionist, nor sylphid grace to allure the enthusiast of romance, yet it pleased by its unaffected courtesy; and gratitude beamed in every

lineament

lineament of a face that Nature had embellished with the bloom of health and happiness. Her roseate cheeks now bordered on the crimson flush, and her sparkling eyes half fell, as, at the request of Dr. Moreland, she presented the young bridegroom, whose manner, although unpolished, was neither roughly vulgar nor confidently ignorant; and, in the good-humoured hilarity of his intelligent, but not handsome features, love, as an untutored, honest passion, might, for once, be traced.

The introduction of William was accompanied by no unmeaning, modish ceremony, but Lucy gave to it all the tenderness of a grateful heart; it was not to Dr. Moreland, it was to a benefactor, a respected friend, that she led him.

An invitation, rustic as themselves, was given to their mother's little cot, where the humble fare of the wedding-feast was spread on homely diaper. The widowed parent, whom infirm health had prevented from being present at the marriage-ceremony,

mony, seemed to forget her own decrepitude, as she again beheld her dearest treasure; and maternal affection triumphed over corporeal ill, as she rose to press her in her arms. Forgetful of those around, impulsively William knelt to seek the parental blessing, and received, in his own honest embrace, the bride of disinterested election.

Dr. Moreland and Lady Zitella Herbert had retired to a distance to survey the trio, apprehensive to create restraint by their presence; but the precaution was needless, for, at that moment, wholly wrapt in each other, they were lost to the observation of ought beside.

A soft emotion stole over the heart of Zitella—it was the chastely-mellowed tremor of affections not yet called into play; and the heart, yet safe within its snowy bed, fluttered with a presentiment of future love: a tender vision of connubial happiness momentarily reconciled her to the mandate

mandate of her mother, and fancy pourtrayed one scion of a court, perhaps as true as this Strephon of the village.

The Doctor had retreated to the extremity of the garden, and Zitella seated herself by the open casement of the latticed window. Lucy, recalled to consideration for the honoured visit of her superior guests, advanced with bashful deference, but not awkward cringing, to tender some of that refreshment their lowly board afforded; and William busied himself to draw some ale for the benefactor of his Lucy.

Zitella, willing to gratify the good-natured wishes of her young hostess, accepted some fruit; and then, with an encouraging smile, repeated—"Lucy, your happiness seems quite complete."

"No, my Lady, no; not *quite* complete."

Zitella was disappointed at the answer, and, with some quickness, added, "And why not, my good girl?"

"You

"You will think me foolish, very foolish, perhaps," said Lucy; "but indeed I believe I should not have married Will."

"Why? Do you not love him then?"

"Love him!" rejoined Lucy; "oh, yes; more than all the world!—Have I not sworn it in the church?" she innocently added, as if connecting with that a convincing proof to the enquirer.

"Perhaps, then, you doubt his affection?"

"Doubt it!" re-echoed Lucy; "oh no, my Lady; that would be unjust indeed to dear William! for, has he not taken me, poor as I am? has he not offered to do double work to maintain me? and has he not refused, for me, the richest girl in the village?"

"Whence, then, can your unhappiness arise?"

"I do not know, my Lady; but I think the greatest misery of all is, the fear of not having done right. William has disobliged his father, by marrying a poor girl: it is I who,

who, for the first time in his life, have made him an undutiful son!"

"And what trade does his father follow?"

"He is a nursery and seedsman, my Lady; and he makes a good deal of money, from all the fine folks round here; and it would all have been William's, if he would have given me up: and I don't think it was right in me to deprive him of it, when I have nothing but love to give him in return for it."

"But, suppose you had such a farm as that of Roseberry, on the Nugent estate, what then, Lucy, could be objected?"

"Oh, my Lady, it is of no use to talk of impossibilities: but, if I had, to my mind, William's father would rather he'd have had me than even Miss Wilson, the great grazier's daughter:" but, suddenly raising her eyes, and discovering the smile of benevolence on the countenance of her young benefactress, which she mistook for one occasioned by her apparent vanity, she hastily continued—"Why indeed, my Lady,

Lady, I did not fancy it, for he said so; and that he was sure we loved one another, but that 'love would not make the pot boil;' and he was afraid 'it would fly out of the windows, when poverty came in at the door."

Zitella paused for a few moments, and then added—" Well, Lucy, do not make a dinner upon that poor rose-bud, when your roast beef is nearly ready; for I have fallen upon a plan to give satisfaction to all parties. That very farm is now without a tenant, and shall be yours, free of rent, for three years; and if I find you industrious, and worthy of your good fortune, you shall never find a stern landlord in my steward."

The astonished Lucy gazed, as if doubtful of the perfect use of her senses; but the honest feelings of nature soon found relief.

" Nay, my good girl, no thanks; the discovery was inartificial—the sorrow, the only sorrow of your bridal morn, I have

unwarily drawn forth; and, to render yourself worthy of the pure, disinterested love, of your husband, is the only thanks I will receive."

William had entered ere the conclusion of the speech, and was at once made acquainted with the generous intentions of the young heiress of the Nugent estates. He was not slow in the utterance of his grateful impression of her goodness, while he involuntarily added an expression of delight, that the wedding-portion had not been the mistress's possession, "because," he subjoined, with blunt honesty, "why then, Lucy might never have known how much I loved her!"

Zitella sighed, her colour faded, that animated pleasure which results from the performance of a kind action, was superseded in a moment by the recollection, that, from her poverty, the happiness of Lucy had principally arisen. She retreated from the reiterated thanks of the mother, the daughter, and the lover, and, taking the

the arm of Dr. Moreland, departed from the cottage, followed by the blessings of its inmates; while their more humble friends, who had hitherto been prevented from entering by the presence of the great folks, now eagerly thronged beneath its lowly roof.

"How gratifying to the heart is the acknowledgment of kindness!" said Moreland—"surely, to hear this language of affectionate gratitude, is the first of human pleasures."

"To receive that of spontaneous affection," replied Zitella, "to me, seems far superior than expressions *purchased* by benefits conferred: the voice of principle, rather than feeling, speaks in an obligated dialect."

"There are instances where it may; but, in this, the union of feeling with principle is certainly peculiarly evident, and, even to the most suspicious mind, conveys a double guarantee; for, if one fail, the other will most probably be heard; and

therefore, upon your own hypothesis, the bride stands upon firm ground."

"I doubt not the ground upon which she individually may stand, Doctor, but I doubt the perfect construction of the pillar sacred to gratitude alone, when other sentiments, equally powerful, may clash."

"Gratitude, in my opinion, Lady Zitella, is a foundation for the most noble structure of which the human mind is susceptible; for I never yet met with the individual, who, being possessed of this virtue, did not discover strong affinity with others of at least equal consideration. The soul must possess a certain degree of rich manure, in which that germ will flourish; and it never can flourish in solitary grandeur; it is a social plant, and seeks a union with correspondent ones, while, of course, it strongly leans upon those of a domestic nature."

"True, my dear Sir; I admit your argument to be just; and yet, such is the contradiction of the human mind, that, if I were

I were sensible of conferring benefits upon any individual, and that object was very dear to me, I should become jealous of the sentiment to which the power of conferring may give rise: I would be loved, independent of extraneous circumstance—I would be loved for *myself!* But, from the fear of received opinion, that other feelings would predominate, and I deceived, would embitter the cup of felicity, and poison that beverage I would taste unadulterated."

The Doctor suddenly stopped; he rested one hand on the ivory handle of his walking-stick, as he firmly stationed it on the ground, and, fixing his eyes upon his fair companion, rejoined—"Surely, my love, you do not mean to apply our argument? you do not allude to the state of matrimony, in your own person and experience?"

Zitella, ashamed of acknowledging that her ideas had really wandered towards that point, hesitated, and stammered—"To an

adopted child, my observation would equally apply; and as I have neither lover or husband, you cannot suppose I alluded to myself in the latter position;" and, painfully conscious of her disingenuous reply, she deeply blushed.

"Well, well," returned the good man, "I am happy you had no other meaning; for fastidious notions, on these matters, must not be indulged too far. We can only judge by the tenor of a man's life; if the mind be pure, so will be the actions; and the good Christian, in thought, word, and deed, will uniformly practise the doctrine which he professes to hold forth, as the beacon that, he hopes, will guide him to that haven, wherein he trusts he shall be enabled to cast anchor."

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime
Has felt the influence of malignant star,
And wag'd with fortune an eternal war,
Check'd by the scoff of pride,
And poverty's unconquerable bar?

BEATTIE.

Morris.

THE allotted period of seclusion passed with the usual swiftness of time, and we therefore leap over inferior incident, to celebrate that epoch, when the grand *debût* of our heiress was to commence, under the auspices of the nabob, who returned to England in the month of November; but no longer the bachelor, at whose table

Lady Zitella Herbert was to have presided; for, three months before his departure from India, he had surrendered his liberty for matrimonial fetters; and, accompanied by his bride, had finally embarked for the shores of Britain.

An agent in England had previously purchased for him, an elegant mansion in Park-lane, and superintended its costly splendour of decoration, while the lavish hand of profusion spared not expence in the magnificence of modern European luxury. Lady Zitella Herbert received a letter from him, bearing the date of Portsmouth; it was kind and affectionate in its style, acquainting her with his recently-formed connexion, and coupled with his Fanny's anxious desire, to greet her new relative beneath their roof, and to have their mansion considered as her future home: he, however, deemed it advisable first to visit London, to make suitable arrangements in his establishment, ere he claimed his young ward; and, having completed

pleted that necessary appendage to wealthy grandeur, he should immediately repair in person to Dorsetshire, to return his acknowledgments to those kind friends who had, for a time, extended their protection, and finally release them from the care of their long-cherished inmate.

The separation annexed to the promised visit, damped the pleasure our heroine had else anticipated, in greeting the beloved brother of her revered parent: the period of his arrival was, to her, indeed an important one—it was the æra from which her "*search for a husband*" might be said to commence; for, had she not given a promise to that effect, to a dying parent? and an heiress was not likely to be deficient in professed lovers, to fail in those pretenders to her alliance, amid whom to fix her election.

The time that intervened between the letter and the arrival of Mr. Nugent, was not long, and warm was the embrace with which he folded in his arms his orphan

niece; while, had not Zitella often heard Mrs. Moreland repeat, that an heiress need never entertain fears of a cold reception from her relations, she would have derived from this meeting more perfect delight.

Robert Nugent was some years the junior of the Countess of Darnford, and had now only attained his thirty-fifth year. His face would neither have sat for an Adonis, nor his figure for an Apollo; yet his was a person that could never be buried in the common herd of individuals. His countenance displayed his character, animated by the warmth, not merely of impulsive feelings, but of passions that the balance of reason did not poise: his generosity was impetuous, his benevolence unreflecting; but pride, that hereditary germ which had, for ages, sprung from the seed of Nugent, reared its lofty head amid this ardent group, and often frowned upon the wavering inclination of disposition.

With that rashness which marked his earliest years, Robert had quitted England, in consequence

consequence of an act of filial disobedience, which his own passionate, unbending temper, had rendered the more aggravating offence to his father, by expressions couched in the language of disrespectful warmth. A family alliance, even from the days of infancy, had been projected by the senior Mr. Nugent, who had reflected on the plan, until his mind realized the event as a desirable certainty, more especially, since the wishes of the parents of the selected female corresponded with his own; and even the children had displayed a partiality for each other. Unfortunately, however, for the hopes of Mr. Nugent, the maturer years of Sophia Howard disappointed expectation, and presented a being least calculated to attract the ardent Robert, who, ever the slave of female beauty, traced, in the plain unadorned person of Sophia, an antidote to love, which all the superior charms of intellect could not counteract.

Having positively refused assent to the

dictatorial mandate of parental authority, the erring youth, in a fit of sudden pique at the violent invectives of an enraged father, embarked for India, where, through the medium of friends, he obtained a situation that proved most lucrative in its fulfilment.

The temper of Mr. Nugent, violent, but never vindictive, was appeased by time and reflection, eventually estimating less severely the erring impetuosity of a son, which his own indulgence had contributed to strengthen. The abilities Robert displayed in his first situation, induced his advancement to one of greater magnitude; and the very brilliant distinction he acquired from the discharge of a public duty, momentous in its consequence, was highly gratifying to the pride of a parent. This gave the final step to reconciliation; a will was made immediately upon this change of sentiment, exclusively in favour of his son, with the exception of the small estate called Nugent, appropriated to the

the late Countess of Darnford; and, from her, descending to Lady Zitella Herbert. Thus did Robert Nugent receive, from the forgiving kindness of his sire, that patrimonial property, from which he believed himself for ever excluded by his filial disobedience.

Lady Darnford had ever been most partial to her brother, and consequently viewed his faults and errors only in the light of juvenile indiscretions. The high character he bore in worldly estimation, had induced her to conceive that years had matured his judgment into a renunciation of former follies, while a strong and vigorous intellect must have obtained successful government over his former impetuous feelings; for the partiality of a sister had, by that name, decked the ungoverned passions of Robert. It was resting on this erroneous belief, therefore, that she nominated him one of the protectors of her child.

Behold, then, this individual claiming the authority of guardian, and removing the

the young Zitella from her present asylum to his own roof. Affecting and affectionate were the adieus of all; but that of Mrs. Mulgrave was the most impressive to the heart of our orphan—the parting admonitions of experienced friendship were registered, by grateful memory, on its faithful tablet; but she dared not reflect, that the advanced age of this valued monitress, rendered it probable, the space of her absence might entomb for ever the sage counsellor and the friend.

Her Ladyship and Mr. Nugent set off in the travelling-chariot of the latter, while the Abigail, and necessary incumbrances of wardrobe, &c. took possession of a hired vehicle.

The equipage of Nugent was ostentatiously splendid; the luxury of an eastern clime had added extravagance to his other foibles, and pride fostered its indulgence.

The quiet village of Oakhampton was in a state of unprecedented commotion: curiosity, that love of fine sights, which operates

rates so universally on the lower class, stimulated the indifferent many to throng the road, and behold the novel grandeur; but there were still among the promiscuous group, hearts that throbbed with far more commendable emotion—gratitude to their benefactress, whose ever-liberal bounty towards the industrious poor of the village and its vicinity, had rendered her an object of esteem and respectful love.—They tried to catch the parting glance, to tender the rustic salutation observed, and reiterate the invocation of Heaven's blessing on its generous almoner. Nugent, with lavish, but inconsiderate liberality, dispensed the Indian ore around: all was noise and confusion, while voices innumerable thanked the thoughtless, indiscriminate donor.

Zitella sighed—it was the parting farewell of "*an heiress.*" Individual self could claim nought of these expressions of regard and interest—her fortune alone had purchased them; to that were they due, at least

least thus argued the possessor of wealth; and in that thought vanished every pleasure, which might otherwise have attached to the untutored gratitude of these children of Nature.

The impatient postillions waved their whips around, to repel the impeding croud, and swift the fleeting greys bore the carriage and its contents beyond the village group; but, as they passed through the turnpike, and ascended slowly a steep acclivity they had now reached, two other objects of recognition struck the view of our heroine—Lucy and her husband William.

The snow had, for some minutes, given intimation, that it would be prudent for pedestrians to seek a shelter; but, at this moment, it descended in thicker succession and larger flakes, united with a shower of hail, and "the pelting of the pitiless storm" assailed the rustic bride, as she encountered a stile. Her faithful William had, with the flap of his coat, attempted a sort of

of umbrella, to defend the head of her he loved from the annoyance of its visitation. The laughing Lucy was amused at the earnestness and inefficacy of his attempts, while she brushed from her face and hair the intruders. But the fears of William had taken alarm: in an instant the coat was stripped from his own shoulders, and tenderly wrapped around those of his wife, while the neat Spitalfields-manufactured handkerchief was loosed from his neck, and, being carefully placed upon the head of Lucy, was tied under her chin.

This was scarcely accomplished, ere the carriage reached the interesting spot. The eyes of the village belle, arrested by the approach, were transferred from the lord of her affections to the face of Zitella; but the anxious husband was so wholly engrossed by the one object of his immediate interest, that he appeared neither to hear, nor even to see, our travellers, till the curtseying Lucy directed his attention; but he, even then, still continued to wrap around

around the sheltering coat, as he tendered his rustic bow to the gentry.

This scene of rural connubial affection rapidly vanished from sight, by the speed of the horses; but it rested much longer upon the mind of Zitella—"Happy Lucy!" she mentally apostrophized; "how secure is thy fabric of felicity! No fears assail thy bosom, of the real motives which influenced the decision of thy wedded love; neither rank or wealth could lead to a suspicion of his truth, for thou happily possessed neither; and the husband of thy election is yet the fond devoted lover!—How soothing to thy feelings must have been the tender solicitude of William, assured that *disinterested* affection could alone have operated with him! While I, in wretched contrast, behold myself, while the object of general attention, doubtful if even the assiduity of my waiting-maid may not rather be to *the heiress* than the benefactress of herself and family; whether, at the moment I discovered her weeping beside my bed

bed of sickness, the source from whence those tears flowed, originated in the possible loss of a lucrative situation, or of the friend who had so often relieved her distresses; and, in taking her under her own protection, placed her in that situation which raised her above the immediate pressure of pecuniary distress."

One reflection rapidly succeeded to another, but each was gloomy as the former; until, feeling really ashamed of thus repining, and of thus anticipating future evils, she sought an apology for the suspicion she had imbibed, by reviewing, for the hundredth time, the miseries of her mother, originating from a similar source, aided by a blind credulity she wished to arm her own mind from engendering.—Rallying, therefore, her spirits, she made a passing observation to her companion, by way of a renewal of conversation; but not receiving any immediate reply, she turned towards him with surprise, and beheld him buried in profound reflection, and

and this evidently not of a pleasurable nature; indeed so completely absorbed was he in his own train of thinking, that he neither heard the sentence addressed to him, or observed the aroused attention of his fellow-traveller.

Zitella was astonished; she contemplated him, for some moments, in silence. His mind was evidently distressed—it laboured with some concealed cause; but, of what nature, perplexed and distressed her: he was rich, had married the woman of his free election, had, after an exile of many years, returned, with professed delight, to his country and connexions; from what then could his uneasiness originate? for his countenance and abstraction gave strong indication of a mind not at ease.

The involuntary question of, "Are you ill, my dear Sir?" burst from her lips.

He started from his reverie, the cloud on his brow vanished; he replied with quickness—"No, my dear girl, I never felt

felt better in my life; and I could not be otherwise than happy, for," he continued, smiling, as if at the picture of his creative fancy, "I had, in idea, finished my journey; and, safely arriving at home, had figured to my imagination our little group seated at a domestic fireside."

"The perspective charms me," cried Zitella—"how delighted I shall be to realize it! for surely no happiness can be so perfect as that which an united family-circle can produce—

'Where thought meets thought, ere from the lip it part,
And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart!'"

"Such a picture," returned Nugent, "is indeed charming, and each feeling bosom beats with responsive hope to the poet's description."

"Such, my dear uncle, I am taught to believe, is yours; such, I am sure, I shall find it; for love, I am told, in your union, kindled the torch of Hymen."

"You were rightly informed, Zitella; love

love not only presided, but cemented the union."

"Then," she exclaimed, with fervour, "you are blessed indeed! How enviable is the lot of that mortal, who, obtaining the object of affection, is assured of reciprocal regard in the loved companion of his future hours, the participator of all his joys, the respectable mother of his children, his dearer self, through the stages of declining life! in short, how blest are you, my uncle!"

The "*enviable*" being beside her, however, had again sunk into silence: she turned to survey him; the dark brown, for which he was indebted to the warm salute of an eastern sun, had given place to a crimson hue—he was even agitated!—Zitella felt confused, though she knew not why; and was inexpressibly relieved, by the carriage abruptly stopping at the door of an inn, for the horses to bait.

Mr. Nugent descended, and offered his hand to assist his fellow-traveller; but, as the

the snow continued to fall heavily, and the detention would not, she was told, be more than a few minutes, she wrapped her pelisse closely around her, and signified her wish to retain her station: the door was, therefore, closed, and she was left to herself.

In a few minutes, a coronetted post-chariot drove up, and an elderly gentleman, with an emaciated invalid by his side, met her view, as its contents. The steps were let down, while the two outriders, with the master of the inn and the single waiter it produced, were all busy in assisting the senior to alight, with every possible attention to ward off from him the inclement weather. They all disappeared together, by entering the house, without the smallest attention to the invalid, who, at that moment, approached the door of the carriage, from whence the hostler of the inn had already begun to loosen the horses. The sick man was unable

able to descend without aid; and therefore, with feeble voice, called out to him to afford the necessary assistance.

"Ods zooks, Mr. Morris, I did not see you, or I should have com'd here afore! What a sin and shame it is, to serve a Christian body so! Well, never mind it, master; them who has their share in this world, can't expect it in the next; one can't eat one's cake and have one's cake too, that's for sartain."

The young man, raising his eyes, beheld Zitella, whose whole attention seemed rivetted to himself, as she leaned out of the carriage, while her expressive countenance beamed with sympathy and interest. The pallid hue of his complexion was illumined by the hectic of a moment: he silently bowed, in passing; and, resting on the arm of the hostler, reached the house with difficulty.

In a few minutes, the compassionate valet of the stable re-appeared, when our heroine,

heroine, with some earnestness of manner, enquired, who were the two gentlemen recently arrived?

Honest Jacob scratched his head—"Why, Miss, I thought every fool know'd our Lord; why, he's the Earl of Eddermore, who lives about five miles furder on; and the poor young man, who is a dying, is the son of the Lord's only sister. The folks about here do say, that he fell in love with his cousin, Lady Ann; but, as he had not a guinea in the whole 'varsal world, the Lord crossed their loves, and made his daughter marry some outlandish foreign man as had; and so poor Mr. Morris has brokt his heart."

"Unfortunate Morris!" ejaculated Zitella.

"Aye, unfortunate indeed, Miss, if you was but worthy to know all! Why, the servants uses him worser than our post-horses; for, when they be sick, why, the farrier-doctor drenches 'em, and looks a'ter 'em, and takes care of 'em, and bleeds 'em

a bit; but poor Mr. Morris, you see, has not one soul to take care of he, no, not even to help 'en out of the coach, though you see as how he can hardly stand, nor to cover him, poor soul, from the snow as is a falling."

"Why," returned Zitella impatiently, "what has Mr. Morris done to be so treated?"

"Ods zooks, Miss!" returned the hostler, "why now, didn't I tell ye, he had not a guinea in the 'varsal world? and folks don't do things now-a-days without being paid for it; and this young man is an orphan body, and so, I think, the sooner he goes to his long home, the better for he. But, zooks, Miss, I be wanted! so, my service to you;" and, scraping his foot, and placing his hat firmly in its original position, on his head, he moved off, at the moment the step was let down for Mr. Nugent to re-enter the carriage, followed by the curtseying landlady with a waiter filled with jellies and biscuits.

Zitella

Zitella partook of each; and, with her mind brooding over the miseries of the unhappy Morris, she listened to a ludicrous description, with which her uncle attempted to entertain her, of the reception of the man of wealth, by the obsequious landlord of the Angel inn.

When they alighted to dine, Mr. Nugent laughingly said—" I really believe, my dear Zitella, that I have never intimated to you a retrogade movement in our journey, that I have not only meditated, but actually arranged for you; but, in fact, my ideas have been a little bewildered, on which consideration you must pardon my sin of omission."

" Most readily!" she good-humouredly returned—" But, to what corner of this habitable isle do you mean to transport me? as, in truth, I feel no disinclination to extend our journey; for I have not, as yet, been much of a traveller."

" Nor will you now," he returned; " our visit will only detain us an extra

day, and is intended for your other guardian, Lord Edgeworth, with whom it will be necessary that I make some previous arrangement as to money-transactions; and indeed I think it will be but an act of respectful attention, that you pay a visit of ceremony to his Lordship, and recognise him in the light to which I allude. The estate on which he now resides, I am informed, lies on the borders of Salisbury Plain; but sequestered, I am told, from the busy haunts of men."

"I am much pleased at the prospect," returned Zitella, "and shall be delighted to carry it into effect, as I have no recollection whatever of Lord Edgeworth, so many years have elapsed since we parted, and I feel anxious to be made known to this valued friend of my beloved mother."

The evening was so tempestuous and dark, that the travellers resolved to remain at the inn until the following morning, when they hoped to reach their place of destination by the dinner hour.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

"Why did the gods such various blessings pour
On helpless mortals, from their grateful hands
So soon the short-liv'd bounty to recal?"

.....

Ye cruel maids,
When first ye 'gan to weave my web of fate,
Ye dy'd it with the roseate hue of spring!
At length the raven croak'd—with joy ye snatch'd
The cords of woe, and dipp'd the unfinish'd web
Deep in the pitchy waters of despair!

SAYERS.

Heath House.

ABOUT three o'clock, the carriage reached Salisbury; and, on enquiring at the principal inn, were directed in the road to Heath House, on the borders of the Plain.

Heavy clouds darkened the atmosphere, which was pregnant with a misty fog; and, as it overhung the circular horizon of Salisbury Plain, gave additional dreariness to the rude uncultivated waste. No human object met the eye far as vision could extend, save one solitary shepherd, who, with his flock of fleecy companions, was pursuing his lonely course across the gloomy common; while, at the extremity of its most desert side, Heath House stood conspicuous, unsheltered, unconcealed, by verdant shade: it was a fabric that bore evidence of Vanburgh for its architect, one of those unmeaning heavy piles, which, tasteless and unadorned, are rendered, by empty spaciousness alone, conspicuous. Many of the windows were closed, which gave an almost-uninhabitable appearance to the edifice; but no dilapidation was visible, for its firmly-built, substantial walls, seemed to bid defiance to the winds of heaven. The court in front was paved with stone, save a circular

cular gravel road, which afforded a carriage-track to the heavy portal.

The appeal for admission was answered by an aged domestic, whom time appeared gradually bowing to that earth, which would eventually cover his venerable remains: his bent figure slowly tottered almost over a supporting staff, as his feeble hand tremulously turned the lock of a door on the ground-floor, and announced the travellers.

As Zitella first advanced, and was on the point of apologizing for their unseasonable entrance, on finding the father and daughter engaged at dinner, astonishment momentarily suspended the commenced sentence, in beholding the individual, who arose to greet his guests, with a manner that at once proclaimed the Lord of the mansion.

A gloomy calm sat on his brow, his eyes were sunk, his complexion and lips were almost equally blanched; and the fine brown hair which yet waved in natural

curls over his well-formed head, seemed alone to retain a pristine vestige of that Edgeworth, who had, some few years since, graced the theatre of public life.

His shirt was composed of the coarsest holland, a coloured cotton handkerchief served as a cravat, a serge coat and waistcoat, and breeches of the same materials; overalls, such as are worn by the common ploughmen, and hob-nailed shoes, completed the apparel of this mysterious English noble.

His daughter was habited in a short linsey-woolsey jacket and petticoat in one, a small round-eared cap, such as is sometimes worn by the children of a charity school; with coarse worsted stockings, shoes of a similar description with those of her father, and a bib and apron, which she was hastily removing, on the entrance of the unexpected visitors, and which appeared more immediately appropriated to the dinner hour; and, at the back of the chair from which she had arisen, an old weather-

weather-beaten Dunstable bonnet was slung by well-washed strings, which were the only ribbons affixed to it. But buoyant health sat enthroned on the cheeks of Flora; her hazel eyes sparkled with the emanation of unexpected delight, and on her arch mouth dimpled volatility was strongly pictured.

The manner of Lord Edgeworth was pregnant with an elegance of refinement, ill accordant to his personal habiliments; but the tone of his voice was almost sepulchral—it sounded as from the depths of a care-worn heart, and, stamped with suffering, diffused an almost awful gloom over his auditors: but he seemed himself unconscious of its effect. With affectionate warmth he pressed the hand of Zitella, and cordially greeted the return of Nugent to his native country; but no smile of even momentary pleasure, broke the mournful solemnity of his countenance.

The nabob, in his usual inconsiderate manner, abruptly exclaimed—"Heavens, what a metamorphosis! Positively, I can

scarcely recognize my early friend, the gay, the fashionable Lord Edgeworth, of Pall-Mall, in his rustic garb, his rustic abode!—But, surely it is not quite right to strip the habiliments of fashion from this fair nymph, to aid the deception, and induce us to imagine we must have mistaken our intended spot of destination."

"Indeed it is not right," re-echoed Flora; "but my father will have me dress thus; and I am very much inclined to disobedience, for I cannot like being disguised as a poor peasant, and not suffered to be distinguished from one."

"Flora," repeated Lord Edgeworth, in a severe but agitated tone, "have I not told you, this repining, in which you indulge, is most painful, most afflicting to me?" Then, turning immediately to Nugent—"The fashionist of Pall-Mall, my dear friend, would appear strangely ill adapted to the region of Salisbury Plain! I have assimilated myself and my daughter to the spot we inhabit, and bidden adieu

for

for ever to the follies and frivolities attached to a Peer of the great world.—But, may I venture to invite Lady Zitella and yourself to partake our rural fare? Had I been apprised of the honour intended, I should, in the true rustic style of compliment, have selected viands better adapted to the more sophisticated taste of my town guests."

An accommodating answer being returned, the travellers took possession of two wooden chairs, at a deal table, covered with a diaper cloth, and laden only with one delf dish of boiled beef, and a correspondent one of potatoes, bone-handled knives and forks, horn cups, and one glass saltcellar!

"Variety, my Lord," resumed Nugent, "is always a welcome guest, let her wear what form she may; and, of your concurrence in this opinion," he added, with an arch smile, as he surveyed the room, "we have no reason to doubt. But in vain do

I look for the fair who presides in this mansion; is Lady Edgeworth——"

"Do me the favour," interrupted his Lordship in a hurried tone, "to hand me that saltcellar; for our house boasted but of two, and an accident yesterday demolished one of them.—Flora, Lady Zitella has no bread: pray help your neighbour, and then extend your bounty to us."

"But," continued Mr. Nugent, who did not appear to have noticed the confused manner of his host, "is not Lady Edgeworth here?"

"No," hastily replied his Lordship—"But I have forgotten to take out the wine: I trust we all like port, for, in fact, I have no other to offer; and, being my own butler, you must pardon my quitting the table:" and, thus saying, he rose, and, opening a closet, placed the wine before them. His hand trembled, as he filled the glasses; and, taking up his own, bowed to the ladies, at the moment the incorrigible

Nugent

Nugent again exclaimed—"Well; but, my good Lord, my question remains unanswered; therefore, permit me to empty my bumper to the health of the absentee—Lady Edgeworth."

The wine had that instant been raised to the lips of her husband; he started in apparent agony, the glass fell from his nerveless hand, and, with a deep heavy groan, he sunk back in his chair; the colour had faded from his cheeks, and the strongest emotion convulsed his frame.

Nugent ran to his assistance—"Good God!" he exclaimed, "are you ill? Take my arm, and endeavour to quit the room."

His Lordship slowly rose, and, waving his hand not to be followed, went out upon the lawn.

Flora looked distressed, as Zitella enquired if she had ever before witnessed a similar indisposition?

"No," she replied, "not often; but perhaps it would have been better if—if my mother had not been mentioned."

Nugent

Nugent apologised for his own incaution, but assured the blushing girl, he had not heard of the family loss which had been sustained.

"She is not dead," continued Flora; "but my father will not permit her to come here, nor will he allow me to go to her, although I long most ardently to see her.—Did you know Lady Edgeworth?"

"I had that honour once," resumed Nugent; "but circumstances in early life, separated me from my friends and country, and I retain consequently but a faint recollection of her Ladyship; and my recent return to England has not afforded me the opportunity of renewing that acquaintance."

"She is very amiable," replied Flora, "very beautiful, and very fond of both my father and myself. I wish very much he would allow me to see her, if it was even but for a day. Do you not think he ought, Sir?"

"My opinion, Miss Edgeworth, cannot be

be relied upon, as I am wholly ignorant of every circumstance that operates, and am not a little distressed at the incident which has given birth to the conversation.—But, had I not better seek his Lordship?"

"Oh no!" she hastily returned—"he would not like to be interrupted."

"I had no idea," continued Nugent, "of this unfortunate separation, for not a syllable respecting it had ever reached me."

"It was a terrible thing," sighed Flora, as the starting tears overflowed; "and yet, I am sure, they love each other tenderly; for, the last time I ever mentioned her to my father, he folded me to his heart, while he said, 'Remember, my child, when I am no more, that I wish to impress upon your mind my fervent prayer to Heaven, that you may be as chaste a woman as your mother: yet must it be the solemn injunction of your father, that you *never* renew, at any period, those filial bonds, which I have been compelled to sever; never, if you value the memory of my counsels,

return,

return to her maternal protection.' He clasped his hands, and, raising his eyes to heaven, on his moving lips I traced the name of '*Alzira.*' Involuntarily I fell on my knees before him, I pressed his clasped hands between my own, and tremulously petitioned for a revocation of this cruel command; I conjured him, with all the energy of filial affection, not to exile me thus for ever from the bosom of a fond and virtuous parent. He started with electric force; he looked on me, bathed in tears, prostrate at his feet, pleading for both my mother and myself: his hands moved their posture, they grasped mine with a convulsive energy that almost pained me, and, in a voice I never, never can forget, he pronounced—'My child, dost thou wish to madden thy wretched father? if not, be silent, and submit.' There was an awful solemnity in his manner, which subdued my momentary courage: he evidently noticed its effect, and, dropping my hands, sunk back into a chair; while, with

a firm

a firm mandate that I dared not disobey, he motioned for me to quit the room."

Engrossed by her little narrative, the *naïve* relator estimated not the impropriety of this family memoir being tendered to such perfect strangers, and was only interrupted by its immediate subject.

Much remains of agitation were yet visible; but it was evident, an attempt had been made to conquer them, and it was consequently passed unnoticed.

Lord Edgeworth now endeavoured to resume some portion of calmness, and professed a hope that his visitors would prolong their stay, as he could not consent to the arrangement he had been informed of, for their departure after dinner; as, upon his assuming the character of guardian, and understanding that his ward was enjoined to pass two months in the year beneath his roof, he had fitted up a comfortable bed-chamber for her reception; and a small dressing-room, with a tent-bed, intended for Lady Zitella's own

maid,

maid, might now become useful to Miss Edgeworth, while her chamber would be at the disposal of Mr. Nugent: and as the latter saw his Lordship expected a ready acquiescence, he compromised the matter, by agreeing to pass another day with him; but, as law matters required his presence in town, it would be impossible to prolong his stay beyond that period.

The evening would have passed heavily, but for the volubility of Flora, who seemed not to have an idea of concealing any sentiment, and literally almost thought aloud; nor could the frown of her father at all times repress, or even check, her heedless manner. Nature, undisguised, lived in every word and action of this blooming girl; the vivacious spirit of youth pierced through the cloud of gloom which surrounded her early life: her disposition was warm and affectionate, but her mind unreflecting; while her quick, passionate temper, seldom, if ever, bowed to the controul of reason.

Lord

Lord Edgeworth spoke little, and that little was in a tone of such fixed dejection, that it rather depressed than enlivened, however the subject might, in itself, be calculated to excite amusement; and a mournful sigh would break the successive silent pause, as he surveyed his daughter engaged in gay and happy converse with her young visitor.

In the course of the evening, he intimated a wish to speak with Mr. Nugent in private, and both retired from the room.

"This is just the very opportunity I have been desiring," said the volatile girl, drawing her chair closer to that of her guest, while she listened, with anxious attention, to the dying sound of the receding footsteps; and, having been fully ascertained of their distance, she thus continued—"You must know, my dear Lady Zitella, that I have been in the greatest anxiety for your arrival, because you can do me such a service; indeed you can oblige me very, very much."

"In

"In what manner, pray inform me, and I shall be much pleased by having that ability."

"Will you really?" replied the former, taking her hand, and looking attentively in her countenance, as if to read the information of an inclination to comply with her wishes.

"Yes," she resumed, "you look very kind, and I am now certain you will not refuse me the favour I require; but you must not inform my father of it, for the universe, or I do not know what might happen to poor Flora; for, although very affectionate in general, on this point he is inexorable; and, if he were sensible I had dared to disobey his command on this head, he would confine me yet more than he does at present; and I am already imprisoned most cruelly, and never see the human face divine, except the shepherd boys on the Plain, and old Gregory and Phœbe, with now and then a poor cottager: indeed, Lady Zitella, it is a dismal life,

life, and all proceeds from a whim of my father; for, I am convinced, he can have no good reason to immure himself and his child in this dreary, solitary, woful house, without even saying why he stays here, and lives in a manner so incompatible with his rank and fortune."

"It is indeed strange," replied our orphan; "but doubtless Lord Edgeworth does not act without some strong and powerful reason, however it may, at present, be veiled from public knowledge."

"It must be a wild, odd kind of reason then," continued Flora, "for I have essayed all in my power to discover one, without success: but indeed I am afraid often to venture on the subject to himself, he is so violent—it agitates him for hours; and then that renders me unhappy, and I am grieved that I have ever asked a single question on the why or the wherefore; for I love him most sincerely, and better than any one I ever knew, except my mother."

"Do you prefer her then, Miss Edgeworth?"

"Do I! What a question!" and, bursting in tears, she added—"A thousand and a thousand times!—My poor dear mother! no, I never will, never can love my father as fervently as I do you!—Ah, Lady Zitella, it was cruel, very cruel, to separate us, for we were so blest a family! I was a very little girl when it occurred, but never can I lose remembrance of the moment—it was a dreadful, dreadful scene! But I must not describe it; my father has made me *swear*, never to suffer what then passed to escape my lips. The oath was very solemn," she subjoined, shuddering at its recollection; "it was pronounced in an apartment my father has fitted up for his own immediate use, and this memorable room I have never since been suffered to enter. But now, dear Lady Zitella, about the favour I had to ask of you; it is simply to convey a letter from me to Lady Edgeworth;

Edgeworth; for, if sent to her town residence in Pall-Mall, it will certainly reach her; or, if not there, it will be forwarded by her steward, to wherever she may be: it has been written, ready prepared to deliver to you, ever since I had heard of the probability of your visiting Heath House, and I am sure you are too good-natured to disappoint me."

"Indeed, my dear Miss Edgeworth, I have all the inclination to comply with your wishes, but propriety would not admit its indulgence; I cannot commit so great a breach of hospitality, as, at the moment I am received beneath the roof of this mansion, to betray the unsuspecting confidence of my host: for, although in total ignorance of the motives for his extraordinary conduct, I cannot avoid concluding, they must be very powerful indeed, thus to have burst asunder the bonds of domestic cordiality, and more especially where perfect affection appears to exist between its relative branches."

"And

"And are you then determined not to forward the letter?" said Flora, while her glowing colour mellowed, and her eyes fell, divested of their happy ardent brilliance.

"I grieve to repeat its necessity," replied the former.

A deepened crimson returned to the cheeks of her companion, and, with impetuous passion, she exclaimed—"Well then, you positively are the most hard-hearted, unfeeling girl, the world ever produced!" and the tears of disappointment streamed from her eyes.—"No doubt," she resumed, "you will also conceive it proper to acquaint my father of what I have requested?"

"No, Miss Edgeworth," returned Zitella gravely, "confidential communication is, with me, a sacred trust; and, however you may misconstrue the motive of my refusal, rest assured, I will never betray ought respecting it."

"I do not care what you betray," returned

turned Flora pettishly: "if the letter is not to be conveyed to my dear mother, nothing else can affect me half so much."

"Be reconciled, my dear girl," continued Zitella, compassionately pressing her hand, "to what appears to me your incumbent duty; acquiesce in the commands of paternal authority; for, be assured, although we cannot divine the cause, yet some secret and fatal one must exist, to induce that restriction of which you complain; and time and patience," added she smilingly, "the two sovereign remedies for every evil, will produce their usual effect."

"Ah no!" cried the sobbing Flora, angrily withdrawing her hand, "they will not apply to my case! My father, though he wept bitterly when he said it, assured me, I should never see her again; that to me alone, he could ever look for future comfort."

"And yet," resumed Zitella gravely, "of this kind friend you would risk the

entire displeasure, to gratify a propensity which, under other circumstances, would be laudable; but, influenced by present ones, would not only be highly reprehensible, but extremely cruel; and, being ignorant of what attaches cause and effect, you know not how wide the evil may extend, or even where to look for its termination."

"Theory is very easily lavished," said Flora, "but not so readily practised. Your Ladyship can *reason* coolly—I *feel* warmly: had you, like me, been torn from the arms of a fond affectionate mother, one who, although young and beautiful, had watched with tender solicitude over your infant years, who had nursed you at her bosom, and first directed the expansion of your budding ideas, you would not, could not, argue thus frigidly correct."

"Your appeal affects my heart," returned the former, "but cannot shake my resolve, for it is fixed on principle. I too had a fond, a doating mother; and I act,

even

even now, from the conviction, that her counsels would have been for me to have persevered in following the dictates of a conscience which still tells me I am right."

"Ah! it is very easy to act right," rejoined Flora, as she tangled the thread she was winding off, with as much dexterity as absence of mind; "where every thing runs smooth, what can an *heiress* want, that she cannot purchase?"

"That very blessing," interrupted Zitella, "which you yourself stand in need of—*content*. Be assured, it is *very* possible for an "*heiress*" to be perfectly dissatisfied; and, at that very reflection, there are numberless things, which, to be *purchased*, would lose their value; and hence, perhaps," she added, with a deep sigh, "arises one of her "*miseries*."

Flora smiled through her tears, as she exclaimed—"Well, I would take all her "*miseries*" to be in the situation of one. Look here at this little shabby jacket! Is it not enough to torment a poor girl, to

be dressed in this odd way, when I love smart becoming clothes, to my very heart? Ah! my dear mother always delighted to see her Flora dressed to advantage," she continued, while her grief burst out afresh; "and she would look at me, with her sweet eyes beaming with rapture, and exclaim—'Was ever creature half so happy, with such a husband and such a child?"

Zitella walked to the window, to conceal her emotion at this innocent picture of connubial bliss, which had faded with human evanescence.—"Well, Flora, if fine clothes will afford you comfort, I have the ability to indulge you there; for, the moment I arrive in town, I will send you——"

"Send me nothing, dear Lady Zitella, for I should not be permitted to wear it: all my beautiful frocks, and all my lace caps, are now in the lumber-room up stairs, with my Lord's gay dresses, and his fine shirts, and his silk stockings, and his opera-hat—Heavens! who would now think he had

had ever worn one? and Phœbe keeps the key, and she has strict orders never even to suffer me to look at them; and she is extremely dutiful, I assure you; for, except I could jump through the key-hole, there is no other chance for me to infringe the command. But, if I was an *heiress*, and as near being of age as you are, I would wait patiently for the arrival of the glorious day that would emancipate me from leading-strings; and I would fly to London, where I should be certain of plenty of lovers; and I would marry, in order to be quite, quite free; and then my dear mother and I would reside together again."

"What! whether your new lord and master approved it or not?"

"Why, what would signify his approval? you know, I should be sure he married me for my money; and I am certain I should not care a straw for him; and I dare say we should be extremely happy and comfortable."

"Your ideas of comfort and happiness,"

returned Zitella, smiling, "are somewhat *à-la-mode;* but, according to my definition, your theoretical road would lead to a very different goal."

The entrance of the gentlemen here interrupted their conference, and the subject was consequently immediately dropped.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Beauty, thou pretty plaything! dear deceit!

BLAIR.

.....

I've known her long—of worth most excellent;
But, in the day of woe, she ever rose
Upon the mind, with added majesty;
As the dark mountain more sublimely tow'rs,
Mantled in clouds and storms!

JOANNA BAILLIE'S *De Montfort.*

Old Gregory.

ZITELLA, never having seen the far-famed Stonehenge, on finding that Flora and herself were risen before either of the gentlemen, expressed a desire to take a walk to that part of the Plain, which was not far

distant, for the purpose of beholding those druidical relics.

Miss Edgeworth acquiesced most readily; and the new friends had scarcely reached beyond the boundaries of the court, when the latter professed to have forgotten her gloves, and ran back to seek them, promising to overtake our heroine in a few minutes, who, almost immediately perceiving the aged Gregory crossing an angular path, stopped to notice him, with the exclamation of—"I believe, my old friend, I am quite grown out of your knowledge; for you have not appeared even to recollect me."

"Yes, my Lady, I did recollect you, sure enough; but I was afraid to address you, for I heard say, you were a great heiress now; and great heiresses, my Lady, seldom have hearts to recognize poor people, like myself."

"Alas!" thought Zitella, "how miserable is the reflection, that such a character appears to attach spontaneously to that situation

situation in which fate has placed me!" The conviction that it was so held, at least by that class of people, and that thus the affections of her old and valued dependants were alienated, if not effaced wholly, produced an involuntary melancholy pause; but it was broken with kindness, as she subjoined—"Judge of me not so harshly, good old man; for if ingratitude be the attribute of wealth, most willingly would I forego the latter, to avoid the former. Your fidelity, when poverty assailed my beloved mother, I have often heard her mention."

"Your condescension quite overcomes me," returned Gregory, in a broken voice; "indeed, my Lady, my humble services were but few and scant, and it would have done my heart good to have lived and died in her Ladyship's service, if she would have suffered me; but she consigned me, as I may say, to my present Lord, because she could not pay me such high wages as before her misfortunes, and all I said of my own wishes went for nothing; and

when my respected Lady would have taken me again latterly, why I thought it was ungrateful to leave my Lord in his sudden affliction; and so again I could not follow my own inclinations. But it quite renders me young again to see you, my Lady—it seems as if it was your mother her own gracious self, and I was living my life over again; aye, that kind, sweet face, is all Nugent, not a line of a Darnford to spoil its charming goodness."

"You have a warm heart, Gregory: Heaven will reward your merits, for they are manifold, I know."

"Aye, my Lady, sure enough I shall go there soon, if I do not deserve a worse place, for I am fast sinking with trouble into the grave," and the old man applied the back of his hand to either eye.

"Trouble, good Gregory! I grieve indeed for that!—Can I assist you in any way to relieve your distress? Speak, if so, and I will exert my utmost endeavours."

The old man thanked her, with tremulous emotion;

emotion; but his tottering head was mournfully moved, to express her inability to afford that relief she was anxious to administer; and he wiped again the trickling tear from his furrowed cheeks, as he continued to speak—" Aye, sweet young Lady, it is not my own trouble, as I may say, that afflicts me thus, for I have nothing to complain of for myself; but it is my Lord, my dear respected Lord—" His voice faltered —" Oh, what a sorrowful sight it is, to see him so cast down! I who have known him from a little boy, not higher than my stick; and so happy, so cheerful, and so gay; always in spirits, and never frowning nor severe! now, I never see him smile, nor look comfortable, for a moment!—Oh, Lady Zitella, it was a dismal day when the separation took place! I thought how it would be, and I said my Lord could never be happy away from my Lady; and I was sure he never would look up again, if they were separated, as I may say."

"It was indeed a strange, unaccountable event," replied the former.

"Unaccountable indeed!" re-echoed Gregory—"no one, please you, could give the slightest guess as to the cause; for, certain sure, no one ever dared to slander my Lady's virtue; and that she loved her Lord with all her soul, I would take my bible oath of: and as to Miss Flora, she was quite an idol—I used to think she was almost too fond sometimes; for, when the poor baby was ill of the measles, she was just like a distracted person, and never left her cradle day nor night; and would suffer no one to dress, or to move her, or to give her medicine that the doctors ordered, but herself: and she was so kind to all the poor—not a tenant on the estate but used to bless, and quite worship her: and sure never were two such generous hearts united in one, as our Lord and Lady; and then, after seven years of peace, and happiness, and joy, why then, all in an instant, as one

may say, without any reason or cause that any one could see, my Lord declared his wish to separate, and take Miss Flora with him into the country, from her dear mother!

"It was all no sooner said than done; and, before any one could look round them, it was all settled and fixed; and I was to follow to Heath House, in a fortnight after my Lord set out—and a dreadful fortnight it was!

"My Lord, my Lady, and little Miss Flora, were shut up in a back room for a long time; and then I heard the door, all of a sudden, almost burst open, and my Lord came like mad down the stairs where I was standing, and he had his dear child in his arms, and she was crying and screaming, and seemed quite frightened and terrified; and then I saw my Lady almost leap from the top to the bottom of the steps after him, and she clung to his knees, and she sobbed so piteously, it would have moved the heart of a stone; but my Lord tried

tried to escape from her hands, for she held him fast; and when she saw that he struggled till he did so, she caught our sweet Miss Flora from his arms, and she swore—yes, my Lady, she really did swear in her agony, that force should never tear her child from her: and my Lord—oh, how dreadful was his look! I did not think he could have looked so terrible; and I never could find out the meaning which was in his fine handsome countenance, but it was horrible, horrible indeed, and he did not seem a bit like himself: but he said something in a very low whisper to my Lady, and it seemed to have a great effect, for she then suffered him to take the child quietly; but her lips were white as the snow, and she shivered all over; but she never moved her eyes from her husband and her child, till they were clear out of sight; and then she gave such a groan, it seemed to me as if the soul and body must be parted; and these very arms saved her from being dashed against the balustrades

trades in the hall, for she fell without motion: and, when she returned to herself, she never spoke a word, but she looked all about her, as if she was searching for somebody; and then she shrieked out, and went into fits, one after another, till I thought she had not strength to hold out another hour, and her screams might have been heard far beyond the house; but, when she came to herself, she was as dignified and as calm as if she was quite reconciled to the loss of her family: yet, for all that, I could see that, though her countenance was serene and quiet, her heart was pained; that she was miserable, and suffered a great deal in keeping it all to herself, as I may say, for she had not a friend with her: and when the doctors advised that she would send for some lady she loved, and who loved her, to stay with and comfort her, she positively refused, and said she would see no one until she was quite well, and then she would sigh, as if her heart would break: and when her bosom-friend, Mrs. Anson,

Anson, insisted upon being admitted, it was all in vain; for not one living creature, except her own maid, would she suffer to come near her: and she would admit no doctor to attend her, though we sent for them when she was at the worst; but she always said she was very well, and did not need one, when, all the time, every body could see she was brought to death's door by the loss of her husband and child; and then it was that the gentlemen recommended to send for her friends, only she would not let us. Ah, my Lady, it was the only action of my Lord's whole life that was unkind! and indeed, when I saw my poor Lady scarcely able to move from one room to another without assistance, yet never complaining, though her sweet face was as pale as a ghost, yet was there something so steady, so firm, in its proud look, which seemed to say—"I will bear it all, let me suffer what I will!"

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Zitella, "what mystery lowers over this unfortunate

nate pair, when a moment seems to have for ever severed the ties of conjugal affection!—Alas! how precarious is the fairy fabric of happiness, even when reared on apparently the most solid human foundation—that of a chaste and virtuous love!"

A pause ensued—the silver-haired attendant was evidently overcome by remembrance of the sorrows of the unfortunate Lady Edgeworth; and an irresistible melancholy had diffused itself over the heart of his auditor, in being thus compelled to acknowledge the evanescence even of that domestic bliss, to which the wishes of her bosom chastely pointed, as the first blessing of mortality.

The softened voice of Zitella broke the silence—"Did you never, my good friend, mention the apparent anguish of your Lady to Lord Edgeworth? it surely would have moved his heart to pity, and might eventually have aided forgiveness, if it were possible that resentment against a wife so amiable, could have engendered

anger

anger sufficiently strong to have caused a procedure important as that of a permanent separation."

"I endeavoured to speak of it, indeed I did, in the hope it might do good, and bring matters to rights again; but I had hardly uttered my Lady's name, when my Lord bade me *stop*, in a tone so commanding, that it was not becoming my humble situation to dare again disobey; indeed, I never had been spoken to by him in such a tone before in my life: and, with a firm voice, he added, "*my determination is fixed, unalterably fixed;*" these were his very own words, for they cut me to the heart, and never can I forget them: and yet, when he had said them, he covered his face with his hands, and they shook and trembled, as if they had been in an ague—he groaned even more deep than my Lady, and so I thought it was better to leave him to himself; and I went away, and wandered about from one room to another, for I could not rest that I had vexed him; and as I went

up

up and down these brown oak stairs without a bit of carpet, I could not but help thinking of the difference between this house and my Lord's own proper beautiful one in London; and it seemed so strange, that the fine furniture that he had been used to all his life, was gone, and nothing but wooden chairs and tables; and no carpets for his Lordship, nor any conveniences at all; and Miss Flora, too, dressed so oddly, and so shabby, as I may say—so unlike any thing she had ever been used to; why, then, I really began to fear my Lord was out of his right mind; for, as to his being turned miser all of a sudden, that I know was impossible, for he would scorn to be such a narrow-minded character. But, however, I have seen nothing since, thank God, to make me think his senses have left him; for he is always collected in all his ways, and in every thing he talks about, and takes such care of Miss Flora, that he is never easy if she is out of his sight, even to take a walk, with me to guard

guard her; and I am sure I would let no harm come to her; for, though my arm is now feeble from age, it would be strong enew, I trow, when raised to defend the child of my dear Lord and Lady. But here comes the sweet, good Miss Flora, herself; and I must not say any more, for my Lord has made me promise never to speak of Lady Edgeworth before her daughter, or else, he said, much as he wished to have me with him, he could not, on any account, keep me here a moment after he should have discovered that I had disobeyed his commands. But perhaps I have tired your patience, my Lady, enough already, for old age will be talkative, in spite of itself; and when the subject has been those we have been proud to serve and regard, it is but natural we should like to speak all we know of them."

Zitella had scarcely time to assure him he had interested, and not wearied her, with his simple detail, when Flora reached the spot. She appeared confused, and

tendered

tendered a hesitating and embarrassed apology for having detained her friend; but alledged no reason why she had done so, although her *errand* had detained her near half an hour. The annexed information, that the gentlemen were down stairs, and breakfast waited their appearance, postponed the excursion to Stonehenge; and the young companions returned to the house, instead of proceeding on their walk.

As soon as the meal was concluded, Lord Edgeworth requested a few minutes private conversation with his ward; and an acquiescence with his wishes having been acceded, he led her into a small room, furnished as the former, if we except the addition of a very handsome library, which occupied two entire sides. Having closed the door, and presented a chair, his Lordship thus addressed her:—"The mysterious circumstances under which I appear, you cannot have avoided observing, Lady Zitella; I shall, however, pass them over," and he hesitated, "for elucidation is impossible,

possible, and to veil them under a borrowed garb, is not my wish. The late Lady Darnford, your respected mother, I sincerely esteemed and regarded while living; and her memory I as perfectly venerate and respect. In nominating me one of the guardians of her sole offspring, she did not simply compliment, but she highly honoured me. Would that I felt myself equal to the precious delegation! But circumstance has unnerved the powers of my mind, and unfitted me for the more chearful walks of life. Although, under certain events, I am become a solitary, yet my natural disposition is not misanthropic—I view mankind with no jaundiced eye: I have, in my pilgrimage through life, possessed friends, steady, faithful friends; I have even tasted the happiness of reciprocal, virtuous, connubial love, in its warmest, most fervent nature." The lip of the speaker quivered. "But of this I dare not trust myself to speak; it will suffice to say, I never shall again invade the busy haunts

of

of public life. Yet if, under present influence, I can in any way render your Ladyship service, it will afford me sincere gratification. Happiness and pleasure are erased from my vocabulary; but all the feelings left, which attach to parental solicitude, will ever be devoted to your welfare; and upon these professions you may safely rely."

"I place implicit confidence in your Lordship's assertion," replied Zitella, "and gratefully acknowledge the kindness it intimates, since my mother had long taught me to value the friendship and interests of an individual she contemplated on so exalted a pinnacle of rectitude, while she registered her obligations on the heart of her daughter."

The gloomy solemnity of Edgeworth's countenance momentarily softened to a less painful melancholy, and its mellowed dejection spoke a resistless language to the feeling heart of his companion—"The truly generous mind, my young friend, possesses

possesses a microscopic vision, which is ever raised to contemplate the trifling services of others—such was that of the valued Countess; and as her daughter, Lady Zitella, even independent of your own virtues, you will ever claim from me care and attention: I only lament that the retirement in which I now live, should preclude its fulfilment, to that extent to which my inclination would otherwise point."

"It would really, my Lord," returned Zitella, "afford me both advantage and sincere gratification, if I could, under any and every important event, be benefitted by the advice and counsel of so valued a friend of my beloved mother; but circumstance permits me not to indulge so pleasing a hope. Yet, although your Lordship is devoted to this solitude, at a future moment I will still venture to hope, you will allow my young friend, Miss Edgeworth, to emerge; and that to my tender care you will, if even but for a short time, commit this darling of your hopes."

Lord

Lord Edgeworth rose, with sudden agitation—" Pardon my decided negative, dear Lady Zitella; but it is thus abruptly declared, to bar all intercession. If my poor volatile Flora were to hear of this friendly proposal, the energy of youthful anticipation would aid a natural wish for variety, and I should be distressed to curb a propensity so consonant to her years and disposition; but my child must not now enter on the busy scenes of life—under present and probable circumstances, she never will quit this solitude; no," he added, pacing the room with quick disordered step, " no, never will she pass the proscribed circle in which I require her to remain !—Discourage, therefore, my sweet young friend, all idea of change; neither whim, caprice, passion, or resentment, influence my decision. Alas, alas! a more fatal cause exists !" and, throwing himself into a chair, he gasped with impeded respiration.

Zitella approached, distressed and alarm-

ed at his emotion; and, feeling real regret for having unwarily excited it, she took his trembling hand in hers—"Forgive, my dear Sir, the pain I have involuntarily inflicted, and never more will I revive the subject."

He pressed her hand—"Suffer me then abruptly to dismiss it, and resume another," he added, interrupting her with quickness, while effort alone enabled him to aid his purpose—"We will now descend to the discussion of money transactions. My late friend, Lady Darnford, has particularly requested, that every matter of that description may rest wholly with me, wisely to avoid the frequent unpleasant questions which often occur between near relatives. Your fortune, Lady Zitella, is very considerable; but report and my present observation unite to convince me, that your native discretion, and proper mode of education, have produced such admirable fruit, that I may venture to entrust you, even at this early period of your independance, with

with that power with which circumstance has invested me. Your pursuits, I am assured, will always be such as must meet the approbation of your warmest friends; and, thus imprest, I stipulate no terms with you. Your Ladyship's bills upon me will always be honoured; and this assurance is sufficient to convince you, that the guardian will at once be lost in the preferable title of friend."

Our heroine made suitable acknowledgments for the handsome and flattering compliments awarded her, and truly felt as much gratified as she had expressed; but was interrupted by the voice of her uncle, who announced that the carriage had been for some time waiting.

Lord Edgeworth drew her arm within his own, and they proceeded to the room they had lately quitted. The coral lips of Flora retained somewhat of that which the nursery language would style *pouting*, and this only gave way, at the moment the carriage drove from the door, to the starting

tears of disappointment and regret, that she was secluded from that gay metropolis to which Lady Zitella was journeying. But a secret gratification did in some measure console her; for, under the pretext of returning for her gloves, she had put in execution a sudden thought of having her letter conveyed to her mother through the medium of one of Mr. Nugent's servants, which was, by the aid of a small *douceur*, easily accomplished.

"The intellects of Lord Edgeworth must certainly be affected," said Nugent, as the chariot wheeled along the Plain; "nothing less than derangement could induce a man of his wealth and rank to forego all the appendages of luxury, all the respectability of suitable retinues and appurtenances, unless indeed he has turned miser, and is taking lessons from the example of old Elwes."

Such was the result of observation in the nabob; for, to him, the obscure manner of life in which his recent host vegetated,

tated, was a far greater object of astonishment than a conjugal separation; for, in the great world, the latter was a frequent occurrence, while the former was perhaps unprecedented.

"I cannot coincide with either impression," returned Zitella; "for, in the midst of his apparent anguish, there is a perfectly collected sense of suffering, a sanity of full comprehension, that would be incompatible with the feelings and unconnected recollections of a maniac. Neither can I conceive his conduct to arise from the dictates of miserly inclination; for I believe his mind too noble to bow to the limits of so narrow, so unworthy a sentiment."

Our heroine was correct—the intellects of Edgeworth were unimpaired; and the public voice would at once have acquitted him of the vice of avarice, since the munificence attached to years of affluence and prosperity, had established the generosity, and even uncommon liberality, of the wealthy Viscount; for, in deeds of charity,

he had shone conspicuously, though never ostentatiously; neither had the separation arisen, as some observers had conjectured, from the discovery of any near blood-relationship between the wedded pair, as no connexion existed, save that of the matrimonial.

The remainder of the journey proved barren of adventure to the travellers; but, towards the last stage, Zitella thought she observed an encrease of uneasy restlessness in the manners of her uncle; he conversed less each moment, and finally sunk into total and silent abstraction.

The heart of our heroine beat with painful emotion, when the heightened noise of the wheeling carriage proclaimed the stony entrance of the meridian of England's boast; for retrospection lingered over the last time she had visited that busy world of splendour—"Ah, my child! it was that cruel moment which struck the knell of thy mother's life!" seemed, in awful solemnity, to resound on Memory's ear.

The

The bell of a neighbouring church, at that moment, tendered the passing toll for a departing spirit; the reason of Zitella, overpowered by the enthusiasm of reflection, conceived fatality attached to the sound—it seemed the awful interposition of a supreme Director, to strengthen the remembrance of those warning observations of her dying parent, relative to the election of her life. She was now entering that city, where, in all probability, her destiny would be decided; and the *heiress* of eighteen, high in youth and health, beauty and rank, shuddered to reflect on the behest of fate, while she viewed her own worldly advantages but as the heralds to wedded misery. The unportioned cottage maid, the lowly Lucy, was, at this moment, an object for envy to the proud daughter of an Earl; nor did even the miseries of penury seem equal to those of an heiress! Reflection, however, became annihilated, by the sudden stoppage of their

carriage in Park-lane. The knocker sounded its note for the visitants of higher life, and the peal roused Nugent from his lethargy. He handed Zitella from the vehicle, with a kind of agitated haste; and as the light of the lamps fell upon his countenance, she beheld it flushed with vivid crimson.

Scarcely had they reached the hall, when a figure transcendently lovely, almost rushed down the stairs; elastic was her light step, and the fire of love and animation dwelt in her eyes; while her Turkish robe, but half arranged, betrayed a sudden flight from toilet duty. In a moment, regardless of all forms of *etiquette*, she was in the arms of Nugent; and every thought seemed centered in his presence, in the delight of again beholding him.

A suppressed smile passed over the countenances of the high-fashioned knights of the shoulder-knot, albeit unused to a public conjugal embrace; but the heart of

Zitella

Zitella throbbed with quickened pulse, and she remembered with pain, that the bride had been portionless.

Nugent tenderly drew the lovely mistress of the mansion to an adjoining room, and then handed forward Zitella, who had retreated, fearful of interrupting the effusions of genuine affection; but no sooner was she perceived by Mrs. Nugent, than, darting forward, heedless of presentation, she caught her hand—"Lord love you, you need not make such a piece of work about presentation! Why, an't she your own sister's daughter? and an't I quite ready to love any thing that has a trace of your blood in it? and so, what signifies forms 'twixt relations and all, now?—Lord love ye! I could have told you were kin by your looks, if I had seen you in Jerusalem!"

Surprise and consternation crimsoned the cheeks of Zitella, and involuntarily her eyes turned with an interrogatory expression to her uncle, who, the next moment,

darted from the room, leaving the petrified visitor *tête-à-tête* with his lady.

"La, poor thing! you seem quite numb, and you look all cold and perished like! But come up with me, dear; you may as well sit a bit in my dressing-room, while I finish my dress; for, Lord! when I heard the knocker sound, and knowed it was dear Hubby, I could not have stood to put on another thing, no, not for George the Third himself, God bless him!" and then familiarly linking her arm within that of Zitella—"Come, dear, don't be so abashed and so shy; for I am already prepared to love you, just like an aunt, as I be."

"I am infinitely indebted to your kind intentions," said Zitella, stammering; for she felt the necessity of saying something, with a perfect disinclination to encourage the well-meant familiarity of her new relation.

"No, not a bit obliged; so don't flustrate your pretty self about acknowledgment: and so now I'll shew you the way, for

for the house is so large, that a body may very easily lose themselves. And now," once more resumed Mrs. Nugent, as she threw open the door of her dressing-room, and walked in first, without further ceremony, followed by her astonished companion, "and now we'll sit here quite comfortable, and have a little talk, to make us known to one another."

Zitella, who experienced that painful hysterical affection between the extremes of laughing and crying, seated herself by the fire, happy that the loquacity of Mrs. Nugent aided her own inclination for silence.

"Well, and do you know, I have not been to see a fine sight since I came here, because I told my dear good Hubby, that I thought it would be more comfortable for us to go out slap-dash like together, and see all the raree-shows at the same time; and, now you are come, we'll start fair; for the chariot will just hold three, without being scrowged."

The astonishment of Zitella was momentarily encreased; she viewed with dismay the wife of her uncle, who was beauty's self; the perfection of features was aided by a faultless form, "*a native grace sat fair proportioned on her polished limbs;*" and while she was silent, which was at this moment the case, exhibited to the mere spectator more than the painter or the sculptor could express. But that a creature, so eminently gifted by Nature, could have been so wholly neglected in education, or the common habits of society, excited painful emotion in the bosom of our heroine, and more particularly when she recollected the near connexion which united her to that being on whom she was hereafter to lean for admonition and support. Could she apply for counsel to him who had afforded so strong a proof in his own person, of having thus largely sacrificed discretion, judgment, and almost every valuable consideration in wedded life, to a mere exterior? for of the goodness of her

her heart, or the rectitude of her principles, time had not yet afforded her the opportunity of judging.

This was the train of reflection in which Zitella sat absorbed, while the beautiful subject of them, having dismissed her attendant, sat before her mirror, arranging, in fashionable form, those ornamental ringlets which Nature had so profusely bestowed, and soon was so wholly engrossed by the pleasing task, that she appeared to have totally forgotten the vicinity of her visitor, until roused by the entrance of some person into the adjoining room.

"Open the door, my dear, and let him in; it is only Mr. Nugent."

Zitella, with a half smile at the unceremonious request, complied, and her uncle entered.

"The invitation is not to be resisted," he exclaimed, making his *entré*, "as, by it, I presume I shall not interrupt the progress of the toilet."

"O no, you won't hinder me at all—I never

never make strangers of my own flesh and blood; for this is your niece, and you tell me I am your rib; and so that makes it out, and settles the matter at once."

The crimson tide again rushed over the face of Nugent, and the consciousness of her own embarrassed looks and manner, suffused that of our heroine also.

"My dear Zitella," he rejoined, "you must assist me to polish my little rustic: she is very amiable, and, being perfectly acquiescent in all my wishes, will, I trust, not be an unapt scholar; for good humour will always be our auxiliary."

"And one of the best," replied his niece, "that we could have summoned, it is so amiable in itself."

The fair bride, with a half smile, exclaimed—"My dear Nugent, you should have left Zitella to have found out my ignorance; you need not have hinted so plainly to her, that when I was married, I could neither read nor write; and as I have been your scholar ever since, I dares to say

say she would never have made out that I had been vulgar once."

The confusion of the nabob became still greater—" I did not intend to produce this confession, my love; but the dinner-hour draws nigh, and you have possibly forgotten to inform our young friend that some guests are expected."

" I did indeed forget it, dear Hubby; but I'll now tell her all about it: first, there is a Baronet——"

" Never mind individual illustration," interrupted Nugent, with a forced smile of complacency; " you will only detain Lady Zitella from her toilet, and hurry its arrangement, by delay, beyond her convenience."

Our heroine was truly rejoiced at the offer of any apology to quit the room, in order to rally recollection and good-breeding, which had been almost banished by surprise at the ignorance and vulgarity of her new aunt; she now, therefore, immediately

diately embraced the present opportunity, and made good her retreat.

Scarcely could she credit her senses, when the door closed on her in her own apartment, and gave free latitude to reflection, which was interrupted by a summons to table.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Ah, cruel love! thou bane of ev'ry joy!
Whose pains or sweets alike our peace destroy!
Still equal woes from thee mankind endure—
Fatal thy wound, and fatal is the cure!

TASSO.

The Produce of an Indian Market.

MRS. Vincent, the comparatively young widow of a superannuated post-captain in the navy, was rich, obstinate, vain, and opinionated; but Nature, to counter-balance these defects, had not endowed her with a callous heart; and she possessed a kind of benevolence, arising rather from the source of quick feeling, than any innate

nate or fixed principle—her bosom was a romance of sensibility, deficient in rationality or judgment.

From the period which emancipated her from the bonds of wedlock, she had resided wholly in the country, and was considered the Lady Bountiful of her native village, in which she had established a small school, supported from her own purse, and aided by the exertion of her own feeble talents. The objects of her charity were taught the more useful branches of rustic education; and as they encreased in years and improvement, were removed into decent service, while their vacancies were filled, in succession, by their more juvenile companions.

One morning that the good widow was returning from her diurnal village-visit, she was overtaken by a child of about seven years old, crying bitterly, as she ran along, and pursued by a woman, who continued, in defiance of her tears and entreaties, to strike her with a rope she held in her

her hand. The face of the girl was already discoloured by the blows; and another, at this moment, took such effect, that her nose, streaming with blood, covered her bosom with the sanguinary stream.

The extended arms of the terrified Mrs. Vincent, received the poor little mendicant, as she was sinking upon the ground, exhausted.

"Wretch!" she exclaimed, "what can this helpless innocent have done, to merit the chastisement I have seen inflicted?"

"Done! why, she has ruined me!—I sent her with the finest young pig of my sty, to Squire Duberly's at the Park, for which I was to have received a golden guinea, and the hussey let a cart run over its leg, and there it is now dying in the road!"

"Dear mammy, indeed, indeed I could not help it; Farmer Dobbins's horses ran down the hill so fast, he could not stop the cart, though he saw me, as well as the pig, throwed down, and the wheels were most as near to break my leg as——"

The

The strap was again raised by the enraged vixen, as the hand of Mrs. Vincent arrested a repetition of its exercise.

"For shame, inhuman monster! Look at the poor little trembler, hear her artless tale, and blush at the cruelty you have exhibited; one of those merciless blows you have already dealt, might have caused her death."

"Well, and suppose it did; she is my own, and I have a right to kill her, if I please."

"You will have no objection, I suppose then, to sell her?"

"Sell her! sell her!" repeated the woman, in an accent of astonishment—"why, who the deuce would buy her?"

"I would," returned Mrs. Vincent—"Accompany me to my house, which is not far off, and we will conclude our bargain."

The unnatural parent acquiesced; and, for a certain consideration, resigned all claim upon her offspring; and personally

delivering

delivering her into the hands of her benefactress the following day, quitted Yorkshire for a distant county, wholly regardless of the future fate of the little sufferer.

The child rescued from actual injury, Mrs. Vincent felt no longer interested: she thought she had never beheld any thing half so ugly; and having summoned her waiting-maid for consultation, was now doubtful how she could dispose of her curious bargain, which, in not possessing beauty, was, in her eyes, valueless.

"Send her by all means, Madam, to the workhouse; the sight of such an object is enough to destroy your nerves."

"The workhouse would not receive her, Wallis," returned Mrs. Vincent, musing.

"Why not then to the village-school, Madam? she would there be taught to earn her bread under your own eye."

"True," resumed the lady; "but that is the very reason why I will not send her there, as I admit only a certain number of children. You know I always select the handsomest

handsomest I can find; and this poor little creature is so very frightful, I could not bear she should spoil the beauty of my flock.—What can you do, child?

"Every thing you please, my Lady," cried the sobbing girl.

"Can you read?"

"No, if you please, my Lady."

"Can you work?"

"No, if you please, my Lady."

"What can you do then?"

"Every thing you please," was again repeated.

"The child is an ideot!" pettshly exclaimed Mrs. Vincent—"What can be done with her?"

"Farmer Dobbins has just buried his parish apprentice," said Wallis, "and possibly, as he was the cause of all the mischief that has happened, he may be induced to let this young one supply her place."

"A happy thought that! Go to him, Wallis, and tell him, if he will receive the girl,

girl, I will allow him a small sum annually for her support: he may put her to her old trade of pig-driving, and she may then become useful to him."

The officious waiting-woman ordered little Fanny to follow her, who limped after her as fast as her bruises would allow.

Nine years had elapsed since this period, in the two first of which only Fanny had been remembered; the stipend for her board had then been stopped, as Mrs. Vincent had heard that her *protegée* had become so useful and so great a favourite with Farmer Dobbins's family, that he had declared no consideration could induce him to part with her.

The capricious charity of the widow had been alike extended to the undeserving, as well as those who had a right to better claims. To be handsome, was the direct and almost only road to the heart and bounty of Mrs. Vincent; and so far one singular benefit was derived from it by the indigent of her village, to whom Nature had

had granted this doubtful blessing, as they were early removed from contagious example, and, when matured in her school, were decently disposed of, either to servitude or trade.

At this period, Mrs. Vincent received letters from a brother in Madras, who had obtained a public situation in India, of considerable emolument and high respectability, and now tendered an invitation to his house, over which she would preside, as reigning mistress; and where every luxury of life would be hers, on a far more extensive scale of enjoyment than her comparatively small jointure admitted of in England.

Mrs Vincent had been ever fond of novelty, and the thought of this voyage was embraced with delight. She had no relative in England, who might have equipoised the attractions held out in the letter of her brother, to whom she was most affectionately attached, and from whom she had now been separated nearly four years. This

This is, however, of little importance to the tenor of our narrative; and whatever might have been the motives which actuated, certain it is, Mrs. Vincent resolved to quit her native land, and visit the far-famed shores of India.

Preparations had been long commenced for the voyage, and in two months, the ship in which she had taken her passage was appointed to sail; when one morning, as Mrs. Vincent was arranging her flower-vases to the best advantage, she was informed that a young woman wished particularly to see her, who had been waiting for that purpose several hours.

She ordered her admission, while pursuing her employment.

The door had closed, on the entrance of the visitor, when Mrs. Vincent turned, and beheld a female of about sixteen, clad in clean but coarse attire; her figure was beautifully proportioned, and her face, the most lovely she had ever seen, was partly shaded by the bright auburn of large natu-

ral ringlets, which afforded a picturesque finish to her appearance, that reached the heart of Mrs. Vincent, through the ever-accessible portal of romance. Her white and finely-formed neck was partially covered by the remains of an old red cloak; but her hands and arms, which Nature had originally rendered worthy of the rest of the exterior it was intended to adorn, now bore evident marks of labour, and were discoloured from its effects.

"Heavens, child! who are you? and what is your business with me?"

"I am Fanny Martin, Madam, whom you sent to live with Farmer Dobbins."

"Fanny Martin!" re-echoed her interrogator—"Impossible! It is not—it cannot be!"

The lock of the door was suddenly jerked, and the farmer himself entered—"Indeed and indeed, my Lady, it be her sure enough; and a better girl never broke bread, nor trod on shoe leather."

Mrs. Vincent smiled—"Your entrance, my

my good friend, is not very ceremonious."

"Lord bless you," cried honest Dobbins, scratching his head, "I never was ceremonious in my life, and it is rather too late in the day to begin now! But, as I was a telling you, my Lady, I will take my bible oath that this here is your own Fanny, that you bought of the old pig-woman, her mother."

The appeal to recollection again presented nine years since the scene of the poor crying child, with swoln features, dirty, ragged, and her nose streaming with blood, from the hand of her unnatural parent: again our widow surveyed her *protegée*—"How am I to suppose, Mr. Dobbins, that this lovely young woman, and that little hideous wretch I sent from me, and would not even admit to my school, from her uncommon ugliness, can be one and the same person?"

The hat of the farmer twirled upon his hand with yet more rapid movement—

"Why, my Lady, the state of the matter is this: poor Fanny had been beat and bruised, till her face was neither one colour nor t'other, and swelled up like a bladder, as a body may say; and she was all covered with blood, like a pig that was just killed; and besides, she was starved to a whipping-post: but, after she was washed and cleaned, and her hair was combed out by my poor Bridget that is dead and gone, and had a good bellyful, saving your Ladyship's presence, every day, why she was the prettiest, sprackist little wench that ever was born; and so we loved her with all our hearts, and she loved us, if we was father, mother, and brother like.—Ah Fan, Fan!" he added, winking his eye sagaciously at her, "and it will be father, mother, and husband like soon!"

"I am at a loss to understand your meaning," said Mrs. Vincent.

"I am sorry for it, my Lady," returned Dobbins, "for I intended you should have guessed it, as I half-promised Fan not to tell

tell too much about it: but, however, I must now; and so it is best to come squash upon it at once, without going into bye-roads to find the truth of the matter; and so, my Lady, Fan is come to ask your blessing, or I am come to ask it for her; and Giles will give you his double fold, I warrant, if you will but let him cast a kind eye on the poor girl; for, you must know, he has taken a bit of a liking to her, and he wants to have her for his wife, out and out, as a body may say. But, humsoever, I have made but a poor sort of a crop this year, and one cow died, and t'other has fell sick, and the old mare has hurt her leg, and I am a little bit in a peck of troubles, and I can't assist Giles with much yet awhile, till I have had another year to bring me up again; and so I told him, and I said it was better to wait, and to think about it, for four naked legs in a bed would never do; and I argufied wisely and soberly, to my thinking, about it; but there is no putting old heads on young shoulders; and the lad

has got a bushel of love sown in his heart, and it will spring up, and sprout out; and there's no pruning it, nor clipping it—he is all wild and harum-scarum about Fan; and so I don't like to cross him, if I can help it, for he is a good, aye, and as clever a boy as ever you may be like to set your eyes on, my Lady; and so I told him I would speak to madam on the hill, meaning you, my Lady, and I thought perhaps, by good luck, you might give Fanny a little, just to set them a-going, and help them on for the present, till better days comes to my farm; and so Giles was all in a fluster of joy; and so I came to keep my promise: and that, saving your presence, is all."

"But what does Fanny say herself to this arrangement?" said Mrs. Vincent, with a somewhat clouded brow; for her fertile brain had, from the first entrance of the beautiful petitioner, been busied in the formation of a romance, of which she was to play the heroine, and did not approve the

the counteracting obstacle which appeared in the farmer's clever boy.—"But what do you say, Fanny?" again repeated Mrs. Vincent; "answer me, and don't stand staring about you, and rolling up your apron, child; give me a satisfactory answer, and you will have reason to rejoice. Do you wish to marry this young man?"

"I wish to do any thing that Farmer Dobbins pleases," returned Fanny, curtseying with bashful fear, while the brightest tint of the rose mantled her beautiful face.

"Then you have no particular preference for Giles?"

"Oh yes, a very particular liking; because he is good, and he is Farmer Dobbins's son, and he loves me desperate well; and the parson told me at church t'other Sunday, I should do as I was done by, or something much the same; and I always mind what the parson says, for Farmer Dobbins tells me that is the way to be good and virtuous like."

"But you like Giles *better* than any one else?" said Mrs. Vincent, smiling at her simplicity.

"Oh no, indeed, my Lady; I love Farmer Dobbins himself best, as I ought to do; and then——"

"I understand you, child, better than you do yourself," said Mrs. Vincent; "but I must consider about this matter. Leave your charge with me, farmer, and I will send to you when I have decided how to act."

"To be sure, my Lady, as you bought her, and paid for her, you have a right to do what you please with your own; but, if I might make bold to say, I hope you won't cross their loves, for it is a bad thing, and I never knew good come of it yet; and I know Giles would work like a slave to have her for a wife, and it would go hard with him to give her up; but I am sure you are too beautiful a madam, to be so cruel-hearted as any thing of that comes to."

"I shall do nothing but what is most conducive

conducive to Fanny's welfare, Mr. Dobbins; on that you may rest assured: so now, my good friend, go down stairs, and take some refreshment after your long walk."

"But mayn't I go with him," said Fanny bluntly, "and tend upon him while he gets his snap of a dinner? for I know he would rather have me than any one else about him."

"I think, young woman, you need not be quite so anxious to leave my presence, so impatient to be gone."

"No, Fanny, no, that is wrong," said Farmer Dobbins; "for if it had not been for my Lady here, you know, I never should have had you at our farm; and you would have been strapped to death, and come to some mischief perhaps, which is worse, with the vile wicked woman who sold you. So good bye, my Lady; I am sure you will be good to little Fanny, for she is your own child now, you know."

Wallis was then summoned, and Fanny delivered up to her care and attention, while Mrs. Vincent retired to ruminate on her future plans, for the advantage, as she conceived, of her young *protegée*. The night was spent in rumination, but the morning found her resolved.

The first action of Mrs. Vincent was attention to person: the frugal, clean, but coarse habiliments of Fanny Martin, were dismissed, and their place supplied by a wardrobe of fashion. Our widow gazed with rapture at the improvement this effected in the appearance of the lovely rustic, and her former idea of carrying her to India was now invigorated, by the heightened charms of the peasant. It is indeed true, that the form of Fanny was eminently beautiful, the heart was pure, and untarnished by guile; but the understanding, never gifted by Nature, was wholly uncultivated; while her language and manners, as might have been expected, were vulgar

in

in the extreme. The predominant feeling of her mind was gratitude, and her good humour could never be subdued: these really amiable qualities were not unobserved by Mrs. Vincent, and she conceived it a real act of benevolence, to promote the future fortunes of her *protegée,* by taking her to that mart of matrimony, the India territory.

Fanny rather viewed Giles with the affection of a sister, than that partiality of the heart exclusively devoted to love: her vanity was excited by the lavish encomiums of Mrs. Vincent, and her weak mind embraced with avidity the pleasures and gaiety with which she decked the expedition: her imagination was seduced; and her heart conceiving that duty demanded acquiescence with the expressed wishes of her benefactress, the humble cottager, transformed into Miss Martin, the orphan relict of a friend, quitted her native scenes, and was launched on the ocean, although

the parting farewell of the honest family of Farmer Dobbins had nearly, at the last moment, defeated the romantic project of the widow.

During the voyage, every endeavour was essayed to polish the rude uncultivated flower, but without effect; for the habits of sixteen years were not easily to be effaced; and her understanding was naturally too feeble to aid the attempt. Mrs. Vincent was therefore soon convinced, that person and a guileless heart were the only distinguished attributes of her lovely ward; she consequently strongly enforced the necessity of almost total silence; and the bashfulness naturally attendant upon such a transition, from the humblest sphere, at once into that society which she had been accustomed to view with reverential fear and timid respect, aided the mandate of the widow to this effect, whose frowning brow often checked the rising speech, and in some measure prevented the exhibition of

of that inherent vulgarity, which, from her cradle, had been the portion of the beautiful pig-driver.

Introduced upon a footing of equality as a young dependent friend, Miss Martin was received with that consideration such a presentation demanded; and the fame of the beautiful newly-arrived European spread wide. Numerous were her admirers, and several offers of marriage were the natural consequence of her transcendant loveliness, in a country selected for matrimonial speculation; but, true to congenial prepossession, the elegant person of Mr. Nugent attracted the attention of Mrs. Vincent; his fortune was large, his family highly respectable, and himself of distinguished merit; he was, therefore, the very hero calculated to play the Benedict of her absurd romance.

The nabob's first interview with the blooming Fanny had been decisive—where perfection met his eyes, he consulted no other sense: her countenance was animated,

mated, he therefore believed it intelligent; she was timid from ignorance, he conceived it the diffidence of mental worth; she was silent, by the order of her benefactress, lest she betrayed the vulgarity of her former occupation; and a monosyllable, yes, was sufficient to assure the lover of reciprocal affection; his own mind gave large credit to hers for the abundant fertility of a soil which he had determined to cultivate to its utmost limits: in fact, Robert was the slave of a personal inclination he denominated love; and if the existence of this be not conceived sufficient to actuate his honourable addresses to an individual who was under too respectable protection to be otherwise obtained, let those who would cavil at the probability of the action reflect on the derogatory alliances of many of our most distinguished English nobles, and allow at least, that *example* sanctions the conduct of the nabob. Need we enumerate the celebrated Polly Fenton? or conduct our readers to *the green-grocer's stall,*

stall, whence two female *graces* have arisen?

The first dream of passion fled—Hymen withdrew the veil which his predecessor Cupid had cast over the mind of Nugent; he discovered but too early, that, in gaining a wife, he had failed to secure a rational companion. But, while his mind and understanding admitted all this, his heart still fondly turned to the unrivalled beauties of her person, and he fondly doated on the assemblage of Nature's exquisite workmanship: her heart was generous, open, and candid; she knew not disguise, and was even unconscious of the deception which had been foolishly, rather than wickedly, passed upon Mr. Nugent; she respected and loved her husband, from a sentiment of gratitude, that was the strongest trait of her character; she was very naturally pleased by her own elevation, but it was rather in regard to the comforts and luxuries of life, than to the pride of playing a part

part in a higher sphere: but it was her vanity which was most accessible to danger.

The veil of restraint which an almost-painful awe of the displeasure of her benefactress had hitherto thrown over the conversation and unpolished manners of Fanny, now began gradually to subside, and an intercourse with the world inspired her with confidence in herself: her charms were the universal theme of conversation wherever she appeared, and she was soon taught to consider them as a counterbalance for her mental defects; the *mauvais honte* of the nabob's wife was styled "enchanting simplicity!" her blunt, coarse, and lively animal spirits, were "sweet, ingenuous *gaïeté de cœur!* interesting vivacity!" and what male companion could refuse the smile of delight at the silly remark or observation, destitute almost of common sense, while their attention rested on the sparkling eyes, the coral lips, or dimpled smiles, of the blooming bride?

Nugent

Nugent felt secure of his honour, for he knew the heart of his Fanny—in that he had not been mistaken; and while she considered his bosom as the repository of all her secrets, he rightly believed she could not materially err. Delighted at the extravagant encomiums of her admirers (for almost every man she saw came under that description), she never failed to repeat to her wedded Lord the substance of their adulation.

Three months after their marriage, Mr. Nugent embarked for England; and the only regret Fanny felt at quitting Bengal, was a separation from Mrs. Vincent, endeared from gratitude alone, for painful restraint in her presence was still felt.—The vessel in which they voyaged contained, as usual in a ship of such dimensions, a variety of persons and characters: reserve was now rapidly banished from the once-bashful cottager; that familiarity which naturally arises from constant intercourse, assisted to aid this effect: the pride

of

of Nugent now beat the alarm with redoubled force, and the frequent blush was often summoned to his cheeks, by the more than unpolished, the coarse vulgarity of manner, which his wife unconsciously displayed; his heart sickened at the recollection of his own weak affection for, and unjustifiable union with, an object so uncongenial to his mental feelings and habits of life; in vain he sought to become the tutor of the beauteous idol of personality —the task was vain—Fanny had neither ability nor inclination to receive the fruit of instruction; and the proud soul of Robert with poignancy was now compelled to admit a sense of his own degradation of sentiment, in electing a female, so illiterate and ignorant, as the partner of his life, the future mother of his offspring.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost:
Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour,
Fear not clouds will always low'r.

BURNS.

First Appearances, and consequent Impressions.

We left our heroine just at the moment of descending to the dining-room. Mrs. Nugent entertained no idea of the necessary forms of presentation, and Mr. Nugent was so abstracted as not to observe the omission, consequently did not rectify it himself. Zitella, therefore, entered almost disregarded; and rather wishing to remain

so,

so, placed herself at the lower end of the table.

The party consisted of Sir Edward Horton, two other gentlemen of the names of Neville and Beechley, and the Misses Harley. The guests had been seated only a few minutes, and each more immediately engrossed with the conversation of his or her neighbour, heeded not the silent Zitella, when, in an under-tone, not intended for the ear of her of whom he spoke, she overheard the Baronet reply to some preceding question of Mrs. Nugent—"Doubtless very handsome; but consummate indeed must be the vanity of that female who would lay claim to distinction so near to you."

A smiling blush rewarded the speaker, and again he resumed—"She is a young companion, I presume, whom you have brought from India? She looks to be a very modest sort of young woman, and to conduct herself very properly for her situation, by a becoming silence."

"Silent

"Silent enough, as to that, poor thing, for I have scarcely heard the sound of her voice since I have had her here—I fancy she is scared at coming to London; not that she is from a foreign part, for she is English bred and born, but she has lived in the country, and never seen or knew this great city before in her life, I fancy, any more than myself."

"A country miss making her *debût* in London! Well, I sincerely wish her success; for a rich husband no doubt is the prize angled for. But the poor girl is not handsome enough for a chance in this metropolis, where there are so many candidates embarked on a similar enterprize."

"*Poor girl!* why, Lord help you, she is as rich as the bank; and she's a Lady in her own creation, and I dares to say, intends to marry one of the King's sons, who'll be glad to have her for her money; but she is my niece, and therefore I don't treat her with the least bit of stiffness or ceremony —now, do I?"

"Why,

"Why, certainly," replied he, smiling, "I must acquit you there. But is she indeed so rich? and is her fortune at her own disposal?"

"Lord, how foolish you are! Why, who has any right to dispose of her?—Her parents are dead, and she is eighteen, and has only two guardians."

"Then these guardians have no influence either over her person or fortune?"

Mrs. Nugent's loud laugh could only have been tolerated by a male spectator, who viewed the lovely mouth whence it issued, and the pearly teeth it exhibited. "How should I know any thing about her person or her fortune? I never saw her in my life, till to-day. But, say what you will, I think her very pretty, and very decent behaved indeed."

"Oh, no doubt she is very handsome," he added musingly; "upon a second survey, very, very handsome; in short, I think her beautiful—her face is one of that description which improves upon inspection. But

But her fortune you were speaking of—that is very considerable, you say. Are you *sure* of it?"

A deep sigh from Zitella interrupted the *tête-à tête*, while she herself was unconscious she had done so; and the Baronet, with ready address, bent forward, to request the honour of taking wine with the fair object of his enquiries. The bow of assent was more than usually haughty, no blush accompanied the motion, and Sir Edward began to fear he had mistaken the character of the modest, decent-behaved country girl. But how an heiress of rank could be left under the protection of such a woman as Mrs. Nugent, appeared to him most wonderful; and he had almost been inclined to doubt the authenticity of the foregoing information, had not the manner of our heroine proclaimed a native dignity, that Sir Edward conceived wholly incompatible with humble dependance."

A pause ensued—it was broken by the exalted tone of Mrs. Nugent, in exclaiming—

ing—" Well, Hub, I hope you han't forgot your promise of taking us to the *fantosimy*; for the little Dawsons went last week with their governess, and I have been distracted to go ever since, they gave such an account of little people, not longer than this here fan, made up in Italy, who conversed, and walked about, and sung a number of songs, and made love, and all that."

" What a pretty *phantasy*," said Mr. Neville, " that must be! Pray, my dear Madam, admit me of your party; I like *originality*," he added, with a smile of derision to Miss Harley, who seemed one of that class of females whose sole amusement, whose every idea, centers in a quizzing laugh, which they endeavour to make appear the more resistless, from an affected suppression.

" You may laugh, Miss Harley, for I should not be angry if you did; for I did not myself, at first, think it could be true: but my own maid Evans went the next night, and she would not tell me a story

for

for all the world, and she told me 'indeed, and *double* deed,' it was true!"

"So marked an affirmative it were infidel to doubt," was the ironical reply.

"But, my dear Mrs. Nugent," resumed Neville, "have these little performers emigrated from Lilliput with a *Swift* conveyancer?"

"Lord bless you, I never said a word about their being *swift!* They might have Harlequins and Columbines, for what I know, but I did not hear they had; although I should think it very probable, for the little gentry could leap through pigeon-houses, and into garret windows, light as so many feathers: and as to their being *emigrants*, why I really don't believe that; for I have heard Mr. Nugent say, that the French folks in these days spring up like mushrooms, and these poor people could never have grown an inch since they were born."

Poor Nugent, who, during the foregoing conversation, had evinced the strong-

est agitation, now leaned forward, and with effort to suppress his feelings by the covert of a smile over a countenance crimsoned by mortified pride, in a jocular tone exclaimed—"Come, come, my dear Fanny, you have quizzed us unmercifully; but, I assure you, we are quite as much in the secret as yourself, and perfectly understand that they are but wooden puppets, danced upon wires at the pleasure of those behind the curtain."

"Lord, my dear Nugent, I never quizzed any body in my life! But I thought these foreigners were something like my little puppy *Bagtel*, who Mr. Dosem, the dog-doctor, gave brandy to, to stop his growth."

"A new discovery in the medical world, eh?" said Mr. Beechley, raising his sleepy eyelids with a twittering motion.

"A *spiritual* one rather," rejoined Neville, with a laugh at his own imagined flash of repartee, which was echoed by Miss Harley, in ready zeal for the cause of Momus.

"Don't

"Don't be so prophane," retorted Mrs. Nugent, "to be connecting *spirits* with the brute animals, when we all know they have got none to go into the other world with; though I could hardly help laughing while Hub was reading t'other morning (for he reads every day to me, to improve my mind), about what Pope says of a faithful dog bearing his master company in heaven. Pope might have been a very good kind of man, for what I know; but he was certainly a heretic, to say dogs had souls; for my part, I will never believe they have spirits at all."

"A very *spirited* retort, at least!" drawled out Beechley—"We are much indebted to you, Mrs. Nugent; for, quitting all grosser matter, you have elevated our ideas, and compelled us to soar to the regions above. Beware, then, how you induce us to descend; and let it not be too precipitately, as we now breathe an etherial atmosphere."

The countenance of Miss Harley exhibited indication of a suppressed titter,

while the eyes of Neville still more insolently ranged, to catch the correspondent smile of contempt.

We have already said, that pride was a fostered germ in the character of Lady Zitella Herbert: she saw her new relative a source of amusement to the guests at her own table, and became angered; seldom had this individual *trait* received so great a shock as in the past conversation; her bosom beat indignant at the stifled, or exhibited, marks of contempt each face pourtrayed; and, absorbed in these new feelings, she was only aroused by Mrs. Nugent loudly exclaiming—"It is on my dressing-table.—Zitella, do run up stairs and bring us the newspaper, for I want to shew an advertisement; there's a dear—it won't take you a minute."

Nugent started in confusion from his seat, and with a smile that indicated any thing rather than what he meant it should, replied—"If you are in such haste, my love, as not to await the summons of your own

own woman, pray permit me to attend your commands;" and opening the door, he vanished.

"Well, what a good-natured soul my Hub is!" exclaimed his other half—"Zitella had quite finished her dinner, and I thought might have gone in a minute, as I could not send either of these here men-servants; but poor Nugent was just putting his morsel into his mouth, after cutting up, and helping, and serving us all, as a body may say; for, as he tells me when we are by ourselves, he does double duty; for I never could remember in my life, which were the best bits to give the folks; for, the t'other day, I helped the Bishop of N—— to the thigh of a turkey; for I really could not see why, if the thigh of a woodcock was the best piece, why the thigh of any other bird was not; and if the head had been upon the creature's shoulders, I should doubtless have sent him the brains, from the same good reason; and, do you know, the horrid man sent away his

plate, and would not eat a morsel!—I remember once, when I was very little, that I was standing by Farmer Dobbins's chair, while we were at dinner, and he said, said he——"

The return of Nugent with the newspaper in his hand, diverted her attention into another channel, and the farmer and his anecdote were forgotten.

The dinner concluded, smoking viands were succeeded by the delicacies of the dessert: Neville, at the left hand of the fair Nugent, offered his assistance for fruit, and was requested to hand her a peach; but was electrified, the next moment, by a scream of—"O Lord! O Lord! I am burnt to death!" while the hand of Mrs. Nugent was wrung, as if in confirmation, and the full bite of the peach emptied, *sans ceremonie*, from her mouth into her plate!

"Burnt! burnt!" was echoed around her.

"Heavens, Madam," exclaimed the culprit, "how could *ice* produce that effect?"

"Ice!"

"Ice!" she reiterated—"why, Lord, I thought it had been fire!—Well now," as she examined the offending fruit, "I do believe it is ice; but it is like the peppermint water I took the other day for the stomach-ache, and as it went down, it felt for all the world as if it was hot boiling water, and yet it was almost as cold as this here peach. Well, do you know, I hate these here deceiving things, for I have never been used to them: the other night, at supper, I went to eat some baked pears, as I thought, and I got my mouth full of potatoe! I then begged for a poached egg, and instead of that I stuck my teeth into *blancmanger*, with apricot atop of it. Do you know, that I think this very stupid?—But the worst of all is, that nasty fashion of washing one's mouth and hands at table—I never could do that in my life; and whenever they put an orange or a lemon-leaf into the glass, I can't help eating it up, for the life of me. And Carter (for that's my housekeeper's name) provoked

me so yesterday; for she sent me up, among the sweet things, some beautiful jelly, with strawberries at the bottom; and I do love strawberries so, as there was nobody at table but myself, I poked in my fingers to get at the fruit, and what should it be, but a piece of painted tin!"

The abrupt interruption of her husband stopped the volubility of the lady, and his rising annoyance now appeared under the darkest frown, as he diverted the discourse into a different channel; while Sir Edward Horton, who was too successfully a courtier to suffer his countenance to betray the smile of derision, aided the endeavours of his host, while he sought to draw Zitella into conversation, by more than once directing some sentence to her individually; but she returned only laconic replies, mortified and depressed almost to tears, from the apparent rudeness of the different personages with whom she had been associated; and, unable otherwise to account for their general

neral conduct to herself, she traced it as reflected from the vulgarity of her nominal aunt; and pride, at least, groaned beneath the blow of contempt. Yet we can scarce condemn our heroine for this failing, since it had been nurtured by a parent whom she both loved and respected; and if we were inclined to extend our reprobation, yet would it be merciless severity, since it is a failing which attaches to itself an inseparable penalty—a proud floweret, whose blossoms are of so tender a nature, that they are nipt by the frost of a moment. Zitella had sighed at the recollection of the miseries attached to the triumphal *debût* of an heiress, and she had now sustained mortifications, that, had she been known in her real character, might have been in a great measure alleviated; since, had more individual attention been paid herself, she would have had less opportunity of observing the sarcastic derision directed to the wedded partner of her uncle. Thus it is with the majority of the

miseries of human life, that they exist principally by reflection on the deforming mirror of discontent: the first epoch of creation presents us with the dangers of this distortion; for, had Adam never repined at solitary joys, he had continued the tenant of heaven.

The mind that anticipates ill, neither enjoys the present nor the future; and is too much occupied with gloomy presage, to derive pleasure from the past. The erring zeal of a suffering parent had infused this unquiet spirit into the breast of youth, while she thought only to impart the counsel of vigilant circumspection.—Alas! these rigid admonitions of painful truism, were, in fact, only calculated to produce fastidiousness; for experience alone can teach discriminating caution.

An insipid sort of query and reply succeeded the ladies' retiring from the dining-room to the rejoining of the gentlemen. Sir Edward Horton entered, seated himself next our heroine, and was among the earliest

liest who entered the drawing-room. With a person that was not calculated to procure for its possessor distinction, the Baronet had an auxiliary in conversation and manner, that amply supplied its deficiency in striking appearance: he knew to disunite the elegance of the courtier from its sycophantic appendages; he was a universal favourite with the higher world, without ever displaying that fawning servility which too often accompanies the endeavour of extensively pleasing. Resistlessly Zitella was drawn by his magic address, to pay more attention to his discourse than she could have believed, two hours previous, she was capable of bestowing on one who had so anxiously enquired the full extent of the wealth of the *heiress*, and who had certainly equipoised the exact value of her beauty by a golden weight; it was even necessary to retrace him anew, to preserve that repellant reserve she had at first spontaneously assumed, since fascination dwelt in the manner of the Baronet.

Our heroine was in the act of replying to some observation he had tendered, when Mrs. Nugent exclaimed—"Zitella, my dear niece, stir the fire, for it looks very gloomy; and I think you may as well ring, and have little *Bagtel* brought down."

A cold bow was the reply; and the bell was assiduously rung by Sir Edward, on hearing the request directed to his fair neighbour.

"The situation of that poor girl," whispered Miss Arabella Harley, "is a very pitiable one. What so dreadful as to be blessed with common sense, and compelled to submit to the whims, orders, caprices, and impertinence of such a woman as Mrs. Nugent?"

"Why, poor soul," returned Mr. Neville, who was lounging at the back of this lady's chair, "under her circumstances, I think common sense is all that she will have any occasion for; so that she do not set herself on fire, and has discretion enough to walk by the side of the fish-

pond,

pond, at her aunt's country seat, instead of into it, it is quite sufficient: she does not possess beauty, and therefore will never shine in the nabob's world."

"Is that your real opinion?" interrupted the lady; "for although I think her very stupid, and that she has an uncommon share of *mauvais honte*, if we may judge from her silence and her blushes, yet she appears what the male sex may admire."

"She is bearable, passable; nothing more, I assure you. By the management of *Hub* and his erudite *rib*, they may dispose of her to a Ludgate-hill silk-mercer, or persuade some mighty weak ensign of a marching regiment to induce her to bear his knapsack; yet to nothing better could she possibly pretend;" and Mr. Neville really looked as if his fiat in her pretensions would be decisive as the Median law, when he again surveyed her—"No, she'll not take—she is a decided rustic; for behold her cheeks are, at this moment, crimsoned, and her eyes thereby do look rather

more

more animated; but, take her '*for all in all*,' I can only pronounce her a very modest-looking kind of girl, not at all suited for a marriageable market."

"Eh?" rejoined Beechley—"a deuced hard sentence that, Neville! But, faith, my optics will never open to take in the sight of any thing *portionless*—I hate a gilt beauty, eh? the lacker wears off, and nothing but the brass remains, eh?—Gad, that is a substance though that never is the worse for wear; for, the more rubs it meets with, the more glaring it is."

"It seems indeed no longer the golden, but the brazen age," said Zitella, in a distinct contemptuous tone, that, although only addressed to Sir Edward, reached the party opposite—"The Shakespearian adage has repeated, that men's *virtues* are written in water, their evil manners only on brass; but I believe the sage bard never predicted the latter would be anxious to publish the inscription to the world."

The group absolutely paused, and Beechley

ley really did involuntarily stare at the supposed daughter of poverty. But offended pride had lent sudden courage to our heroine, who had felt by no means flattered by the appellation of "only a very modest-looking kind of girl," which she viewed much upon a par with the general phrase of a "good-natured man," when applied as in the present manner. "A country miss angling for a husband," was not, in fact, a more inviting character than she had hitherto supposed "an heiress."

The silent astonishment in which both Neville and Beechley momentarily surveyed the quiet, stupid sort of rustic, was interrupted by the ever-expert and convenient laugh of Miss Harley, followed by the tittering—"Dear me, how droll! how entertaining! Only think of the poor thing venturing to articulate loud enough to be heard!—Sir Edward has performed an incantation, and made the dumb speak—he has broken the silent charm!"

"She

"She *bore a charmed tongue* then, eh?" said Beechley—"I should like to compose a little madrigal on her, beginning with that line, eh? Do you not think it would go well on the lute?"

"I think," said Miss Arabella Harley, only attending to the first part of the speech, and now addressing Neville, "that her tongue has indeed been charmed by the spell of the good fairy of Mother Bunch's acquaintance, since, like the wicked sister Fanny, of diamond and toad memoir, hers only gives birth to a venomous produce."

"See the furies arise!
How they hiss in the air!
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes!"

repeated Neville, in a low, but comic tone.

"Of whom are you all talking?" said Mrs. Nugent, approaching from an adjoining room, where she had passed the preceding minutes in placing *Bagatelle* on a cushion by the fire.

"Only admiring your pretty relative," rejoined

rejoined Miss Harley, "Miss Zitella, for her surname I have not the pleasure of knowing."

"Miss!" re-echoed her interrogator, "why that is my husband's own niece! She is *Lady* Zitella Herbert, and one of the richest heiresses in the known world."

The broad stare of astonishment succeeded. "*Lady Zitella!*" was so audibly pronounced, as to arrest the attention of more than it was intended to reach.

"Surely this sweet girl," resumed Neville, "cannot be the daughter of the late Earl of Darnford? the beautiful child his Lordship introduced to a select circle some few years since?"

"Yes, but it is though; because he never had any other child in his born days, I have heard my Hub say: and now that her mother is dead, why, we are left guardians, and I mean to be a parent to her; and she is come to live with us, till she vows "*to love, honour, and obey*" somebody else."

The precipitate exit of the fair object of this

this conversation afforded the opportunity of further interrogatory; and all parties, fully convinced of the real pretensions of Lady Zitella Herbert, assiduously assailed Mr. Nugent with lavish panegyric on the beauty of his fair relative.

The nabob was genuinely gratified; his young ward was the daughter of a sister he had affectionately loved, and he experienced a natural pleasure in hearing the praises of her orphan: his pride was also flattered, by the admiration his niece appeared to have excited; he investigated not its source, for it was an invariable maxim with him, that unpleasant reflection should never be indulged. When, therefore, the different guests had taken leave, he jocularly congratulated Zitella on the execution she had effected on the male part of the assembly, but more particularly on the young Baronet, who could not mention her with any moderation of phraseology.

"Do you mean of myself, or my *attractions,* Sir?" said Zitella ironically.

"Indeed,

"Indeed, my dear girl, he said, you were all attraction in personal——"

"*Property,*" added Zitella, with a forced smile.

"Yes," said Nugent, taking her hand, and pointing to a glass, in which her figure was at that moment presented; "behold therein reflected that fine territory of which he was the admirer, and which, if I guess right, he would be happy to become possessor."

"Dear me," exclaimed Mrs. Nugent, with a look of genuine surprise, "why, he must have changed his mind all in a hurry, for he told me he thought her——"

"Ah, my dear Fanny," eagerly interrupted the nabob, "do not believe any declaration to the contrary of what I have advanced; rely upon it, no man of gallantry will commit such a solecism, as to praise one beautiful woman to another—I, you know, am privileged," he added, tenderly taking her hand, as his eyes had, during

the

the speech, rested on her lovely face, with warmly-admiring expression.

"Oh yes," replied Mrs. Nugent, "you are privileged to say just what you please; I can never be angry with him that I love better than all the world, and who raised your poor Fanny, without a sixpence in her pocket, to riches and greatness. Indeed and indeed, if all my love had not been gone to you long ago, I should love you better and better, every time I think of your kindness and your goodness to me."

The grateful heart of the speaker spoke in her tearful eyes. Nugent, ever the creature of impulse, folded her in his arms, and pressed her to his breast, with undissembled fervor, as Zitella unregarded glided from the room.

Never had the beauty of our heroine been more completely veiled than during this day; the fatigue of her journey had produced a lassitude that had tended to deaden

deaden the usual animation of her countenance, to which the circumstances of the morning had added a shock of considerable magnitude, in the discovery of the ill assimilated connexions of her only maternal relative. An embarrassment, the natural result of the unpleasant situation in which she unexpectedly found herself, gave an apparent awkwardness to her manner, which was confirmed, to the mere casual spectator, by that crimson fluctuation of her complexion, which had its rise in the irritation of offended pride; while compassionate feeling for the distressed state of Nugent, mingled with the more haughty emotion of her mind, and, by depressing her natural spirits, deadened the powers of effort to produce even apparent composure: her dress had also contributed to give, to the impressions of the frivolous Harleys in particular, an idea of her dependent humble claims on her vulgar aunt, since it was in reality her travelling one, time not having admitted its change, when the

the painful reverie of thought had been sufficiently broken to enable her to consider its necessity; and the recollection of apologizing for an habiliment so ill suited to a party, had vanished in the awkwardness arising from the neglect or ignorance of the lady of the mansion, to the common forms of polished society.

From the days of infantine childhood, personal admiration had been familiar to the ear of our heroine; and she had received it as a tythe whose justice had never been doubted, having had its confirmation from the lips of a parent, whose truth she had never questioned. The beauty of Mrs. Nugent was calculated to dazzle with a sudden universal radiance, but that of Zitella arose the higher from investigation: the features of the former would have been better adapted to afford a model for a statuary, or, even on canvas, would have shone transcendant; but in that of the latter, there was a soul no painting could impart, no chissel could express—the very life

life of intellect and feeling breathed in every line; and Venus had traced them with the harmonious glowing colours from her valued fount of beauty.

Strange and unexpected, therefore, was the little estimation in which her person had been held, independent of her worldly attractions; for although she was but too fully aware, that, to the latter, she was likely to owe many professed *lovers*, yet she had hitherto conceived no idea that *admiration* was often equally tried by the same scales: and somewhat of mortification did mingle with the knowledge of the impression her general appearance had conveyed, when wrapped in the fancied mantle of poverty and dependance; for although vanity was not the acting spring of the heart of our orphan, yet it did, at times, play a subordinate part in her feelings; and had not thought now recurred to a more serious distress, in the ill-assimilated protectress of her *debût*, it is very probable that she would have experienced some annoyance

novance in a retrospect of the contemptuous observations of the party: certain it is, she kept the vigils of the night, and was awakened from her first slumber by the entrance of her maid, to inform her that Mrs. Nugent was risen.

END OF VOL. II.

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